

CLOSE UP

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AS IS

BY THE EDITOR

To the retrospective mind, the end of a year that gave us Stuttgart, La Sarraz, as banners to the avant garde—that strange platoon forever marking time—that saw the dawn of montage consciousness, not altogether unlike the angry weal of an insect sting, and sent or promised a thousand and one mixed blessings, talkies *überall*; needs some recapitulation, some winnowing thoughts to shape its varying developments for future benefit.

Perhaps the wide screen is upon us, and all our theories to date will go before the new, strange shape that cinema will assume. If we are like children now, soon we will be infants again, all of us together, starting again, none cleverer than the rest, all equally unsure, and, without any doubt, all equally determined to be first to see the new path, and to point it out tirelessly to the still bewildered sucklings, perhaps not (to be candid) in the hope that they will follow, so much as acclaim. We are all very tribal really, and self is the

first animal law, really, and all the conflict of the world might cease or become rational in the recognition of the first physical law of the jungle, the veldt, the steppe, the forest, the prairie, the ice world—I am. I am, I am—or I am not. If I am not, then you darn well won't be either. Or some such formula.

But this, perhaps, carries us a little (only a little, if we look closely) from our subject. The more one dabbles in theory, the more mythical, evanescent and intangible does theory become. Not in the sense of unattainable divinity, but in the sense of sheer invalidity. Theory, made too precise, can only impoverish. Perhaps because each of us is a theoretician to himself alone, and the assimilation of theory from an outside source chokes up original perception with induced perception, which can have no richness or native element in us. If I see things this way and am told I must see them that way, it spoils my chance of seeing them any way at all. I become self-conscious about my reaction. That is the primitive definition. And what has been removed is psycho-surgical. I have been deprived of the initial purity of visual experience. And in being deprived of spontaneous visual experience I am being deprived of something much deeper—the psychic balance of wish fulfilment. To-day it is commonly known that what we see is not necessarily what is in front of us, but only that part of it to which we react visually-mentally-emotionally. Unless I assume that my mental-emotional-visionary experience is identical with that of others, in making deductions and constructing a summarised and at best fragmentary postulation, I am seeking to impose something which must instantly refute

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itself, something which becomes a lie. Yet man is never satisfied until his text-books de-educate an assimilative world.

The future is going to bring new and always greater problems. Let us understand at least what we have been working at until now before we attempt to cope with them. We are fortunate, says Pabst, to have had the silent film first, for without it our eye would not have been trained to see. As it is, there exists a tradition of fluidity to which the talking film is trying to work back. If sound had come first there would have been none of it, no philosophy of visual exploration. The link with stage would have been too suggestively apparent to have been swept aside for tentative and dubious experiment.

We are fortunate to have had the silent film first *if* we are going to understand it and make use of its essential references for the new technique of sound-sight. But few people, directors included, have grasped the fundamentals of film building. The whole theory of it (individual theory, don't forget) has been left too unarranged, unguessed or overlooked. The arrival of arbitrations from the USSR, instead of clearing away some of the muddle, seemed only to puff away the last remnants of simplicity and craft on a wind of superstition—an uninvestigated obeisance that seems to have permanently damaged the style of many who had been able at least to tell their story with modesty and reserve. The dread word montage ran like a plague. Few could cope with it, most succumbed. Then talking films, we learnt in the press, *dated* it. Certainly montage was no more, except whipped to and fro, a storm in a teacup, up and down the ranks of the avant garde and among ambitious damnateurs.

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Those who had seen the good Russian films were right in acclaiming their richness. But none too many recognised the difference between admiring them and understanding them, between exploration of their inferences and imitation of their method without any inferences at all.

The Russian method was taken to mean montage and nothing more, and montage was taken to mean nothing more than tilting the camera and snipping away much needed footage. The fact that the montage of the films that so fired inspiration had been adopted primarily to convey the necessary implications of the stories they were telling, was not taken into account, and, indeed, the startling anachronism arose that montage, which is continuity, was emphatically *not* continuity. Only the more spectacular manifestations of this particular craft were taken into account, those surcharged passages that swept the films to climax; and these were seized upon as a clue to entire reconstitution of technique, although it would have seemed obvious, even from the start, that tremendous speed must achieve power mainly through its relation to quietness and the pause. Quietness and the pause, however, were out of favour. The result was a garrulous and snobistic falsity. Simple subjects became fussy abominations. Witness Czinner's Pola Negri film, witness *L'Argent*—intolerably bumptious frauds. The most rudimentary inferences of the methods that excited them had been utterly unsuspected. Cameras sloped, tottered, tilted, rushed, fell and toppled, all for no reason. And Czinner and L'Herbier are not the weakest of their kind.

If only they would get down to source, source, source. The source for which H. A. Potamkin asks continually. If

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they would only forget the half-baked theories, and think what they want to express, what they want to reveal, they themselves as life-witnesses, seeing life with their own eyes, in their own way. You would think that we hardly need to be told that the only expression for the implied is the physical. But have even Czinner and L'Herbier recognised this? Movement is not enough, we must know what movement itself implies. We must go to psycho-analysis to understand that action is the modified outgiving of interacting conscious and unconscious adjustment. I repeat that in cinema it is by action we are to judge primarily. With the advent of sound will come in time sound imagery too. I pointed out in an article on *Blackmail* that in one instance at least, Hitchcock made use of the associative symbolism of sound. To an overwrought girl, guilty of murder, the sound of the shop bell becomes a clanging crescendo ending in a kind of scream. You might call that inferential. But it is physical, too. The sound has come through her ears and has been translated to her but (equally to us, who are accredited with the super-power of being able to *see and hear* her unconscious) as the warning blare of danger. "Through that door may come the police". It is because of us, because we have to be enlightened, that film can never be purely expressive. What we are seeing is what has been turned to us, not unlike, in primary intention, the theatre method of setting the stage and everybody on it to face the audience. We are not watching something happening to somebody else, we are experiencing our own reaction to something which has been dissected and spread out for the precise purpose of our comprehension, and unconscious participation. Film is, in

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other words, a process of explanation—the simplest form of which is action. The film of riding, racing, flying, and so on. The highest form is not the film of inference and suggestion, though that, evidently, is far above the film of simple movement, but the film of imagery and action—psychology and physiology, or, better still, psychology *through* physiology. But here we are getting into deep water, though I shall hope to be able to navigate it in some forthcoming issues.

Come with me to the rudimentary principle of expression. Eyes opening wide will explain that the person we see is in terror. But terror means nothing to us, it is not dramatic, nor melodramatic, until we have looked for and discovered the cause. It is then a matter of our decision as to whether the cause would (and therefore by simple displacement *does*) terrify us too, or move us to contempt or laughter—whether we are induced to associate or identify ourselves with the terror we are witnessing, or whether we scorn it, and associate ourselves in a friendly (if sadistic) alliance with the cause of it.

In Dreyer's film of terror, Joan's terror is not our terror because the cause of it is too blatantly (to be unkind) *Comedie Française*, too traditionally and elaborately theatre. We have to reject the cause of it—the posturing, grimacing militant ecclesiasts, as Joan herself would have rejected them, knowing well enough from the armoury of her visionary over-world experience (or unconscious divination) how to deal with them. If Dreyer had indicated, as I have said before, that Joan was a victim of law and order and justice as impersonal as you can reasonably expect from an arbitration of formularised tentatives, the collapse of her consummate

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diplomatic, economic and political resources (apart from the consideration of which particular plane of consciousness they derived from) would have brought home to us a real sense of doom and pity. The sensational collapse of Joan remains throughout history a contemporaneous idea for every age, our own included. Dreyer's film of Joan bore no hint of the illuminating references it might have contained. This, however, is a little apart from the point. Our deduction for now is that this intensive film of physiological onslaught failed as a tragedy through lack of associative self-surrender in us—for lack of the physiology of psychology.

Mother remains as one of the most immediately recognisable examples of physiology and inferential psychology well balanced. From the obvious imagery of the rising mists to the final impact of bloody violence, from the stormy blowing of the mother's flag (inferential imagery of intensely spiritual insistence) to the drunken death of the father, we can deduce a finality of concentric and indivisible connections.

Metronome montage is to vision what squad drill is to movement. Making multiplication tables of your frames should be considered valid only for scenes that are ruled, so to speak, by the company sergeant major. Robot rhythms. Purer movement can so much more accurately be felt with the brain, with the eye, with the finger tips, with the measuring rod and the metronome of psychic experience. If you have the gift of vision. *If you have the gift of vision.* Purer movement can be felt more purely. A simple, elementary rhythm can well, and even to advantage, be controlled by the measuring rod. Free movement must be free,

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controlled movement should be checked mechanically—left, right, left, right, left, right.

Theory, theory. There is the theory that builds theory. And the theory that explodes theory. Remember, *your* theory is more valid, more valuable to you than any you can borrow. Remember, action came first, theory afterwards. There was more unity to *Mother* than there was to *The End of St. Petersburg*, and more unity to *The End of St. Petersburg* than to *Storm Over Asia*. Theory had evolved a surer mechanism, but something had been lost. Even understanding had to some extent been lost. The tendency pointed toward watchfulness, towards preciousness. The bigger sweep was finally mindful of some convention, keeping approved pattern. Atrophy was not altogether absent.

I do not say do not have theory, I say have your own theory. Mr. Potamkin is right to insist on source. Know where your source is, realise the uses of your experience. Remember the only real kino-eye is your own eye. What it sees is your cinema. Build cinema as vision, your own vision, and you will build something worth while.

KENNETH MACPHERSON.

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EXHIBITION IN STUTTGART, JUNE, 1929, AND ITS EFFECTS

The initiative of planning film-exhibitions is by no means new. Its practical execution is a failure nearly every year, always in a different country, always in a different place; though mostly big, powerful organisations and official experts would participate. In spite of which the result has been mostly—in the best cases—a representative show of advertisements or of cinema-apparatus, and sometimes also a mass-performance of films. Apparently without a clear aim, or a system according to the material, and without being convincing. At the end the critics had already begun to believe that film was a matter scarcely fit for exhibition. It was only the non-prejudiced who recognised that the principal mistake of all such attempts was that they had tried to show the commercial side before all and left the nucleus of the craft in the shadows of the background.

As it is—in the beginning of this year the news of another film-exhibition was received with mixed feelings. Besides the principal experience (already hinted at) the new proposal seemed especially to have many probable negative qualities and only a few doubtful positive ones. Stuttgart, the place that had been taken in view for this purpose, though one of

the most intensively developing cities of Germany, seemed much too far away from the significant film activities, which are concentrated in Berlin. The arranging *Deutsche Werkbund* is esteemed as an organisation that goes in for honest work and good quality in all spheres; but its contact with film could hardly have been considered sufficient.

The general question was, whether the gentlemen of the *Werkbund* in Stuttgart with all their enthusiasm for what is good, would be able to muster sufficient knowledge to recognize the specific value that lies in the sphere of film, to keep out the original tastelessness of fashionable innovators, and to fight the hindering tradition of cinema-business. At the end of all these questions one shook one's head in resignation and with a rather tired gesture passed over the rare signs of the elementary preparations. Only when in the middle of the floating events the final programme was made public did one listen with increasing interest. And he who did not shirk the long trip from Berlin or somewhere else, saw different things that—from the German situation at least—had the value of being new.

Though not a film-exhibition par excellence, but in the first respect a very intensive collection of modern photography (and in connection with it the regular performance of the work done till now by those young and detached ones, who call themselves within and beyond the frontier the Avant-garde), the spectator was won by the sympathetic endeavours of *Herrn Gustav Stotz*, commercial leader of the *Württembergische Arbeitsgemeinschaft des Deutschen Werkbundes* to whom the whole thanked its existence.

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Not only because of its importance the photographic exhibition must be remembered, but also, and principally because of the valuable recognitions by which the Stuttgart photographs led to conclusions for films.

From Germany, England, France, Holland, Austria, Russia, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, and the United States one saw the collected work of those who assert themselves to belong to photographic production that is consciously modern. Before one reached the pictures grouped after their original countries and personalities, one went through a room created by *Prof. L. Moholy-Nagy* that represented the development since Daguerre and the spheres of scientific, reporting and advertising photography, in large, distinct lines; the final conclusion of the whole is that the task of photography of to-day is to devote its specific technical means to the active service of the present time, by immediate, unembellished catching of true impressions of life.

The truth of this sentence can then be tested by examples given in the exhibition, in an interesting way. It becomes clearly apparent, that the most characteristic and strongest impression is given by pictures that unveiledly aim at a certain purpose (as the photos of material by *Paul Outerbridge*, New York; the photos of fashion by *George de Hoyningen-Huene*, Paris)—or by those pictures that give an unfaked reproduction of situations (war-photos of the *Reichsarchiv Potsdam*; criminal - photos of the *Württembergisches Polizeipräsidium*, Stuttgart)—that vitally catch physiognomies (women-photos by *Otto Umbehr*, Berlin; mens'-photos by *Helmar Lerski*, Berlin)—immediately discovered objects (photos of architecture by *Renger-Patzsch*, Harzburg;

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animal-photos by *Hedda Walter*, Berlin; flower-photos by *Imogen Cunningham*, California; photos of oysters by *Edward Weston*, California).

But everywhere, where one had got too far distant from the purpose, and approached the artistic modification of the object (portrait-photography by *Cecil Beaton*, London)—where the decorative treatment is in the foreground (material-photos by *Hans Finsler*, Halle) where original perspectives are sought for but for their own value (genre-photographs by *L. Moholy-Nagy*, Berlin)—where black-and-white contrasts are noisily elaborated (photos of scenery by *Sascha Stone*, Berlin)—where an intermediate state becomes the function of a result in an original way (negative-photos by *Andreas Feininger*, Dessau)—where the interest for the object is replaced by shrewd composition (abstract-photos by *Francis Bruguière*, London)—where optic distortions reach for laughable effects caricature-photos by *Werner Gräff*, Berlin)—where scraps of pictures are cut and made up for a unit (photo-cuttings by *Hanna Höch*, The Hague)—where abstract lights on the plate attempt to substitute concrete idea (photogramms by *Man Ray*, Paris)—there, yes, there the new photography distinguishes itself from the old one only by a trick, that bluffs to-day as well as it will be surpassed to-morrow. If one rises immediately against “anticompositions” that treat lines, against decorative still-lives, and impressionistic landscapes, if one stands up against manual procedures, technical tricks and plays of art-craft, one must not forget that photogramms, photocutting and modified optical drawings move in the same sphere.

It is fascinating to witness the crystallization of young



Mutiny. A Sovkino film directed by Timoshenko.

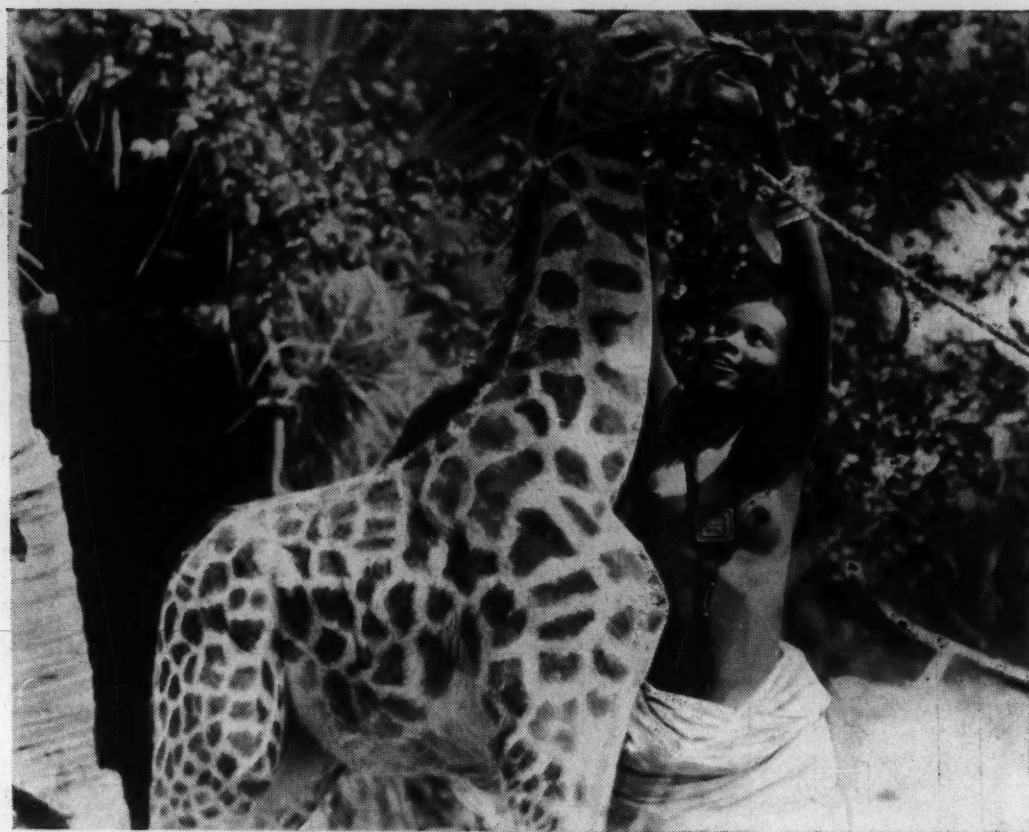


Two Friends, One Girl and an Invention. A Sovkino comedy, directed by A. Popoff.



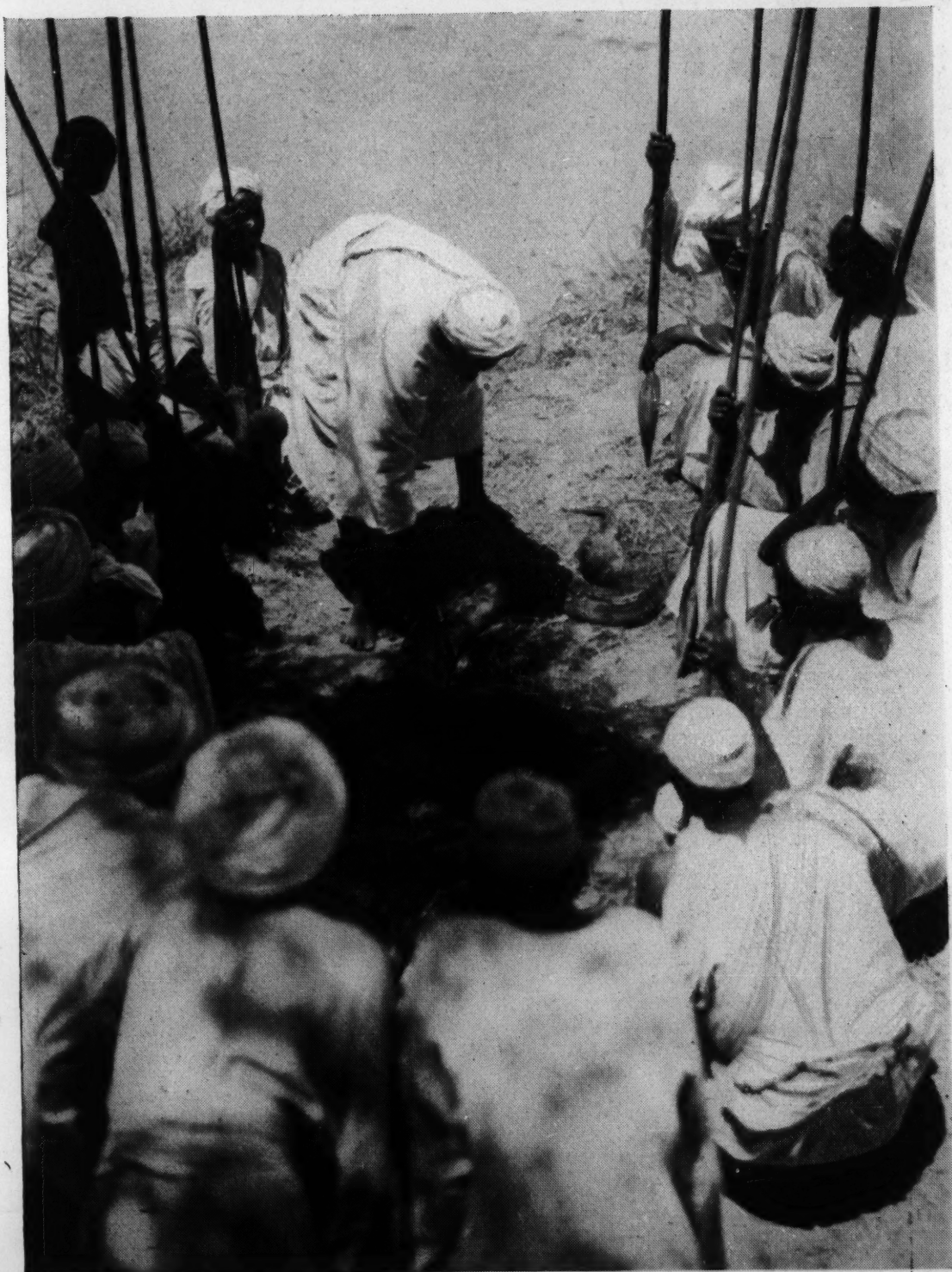
The Rails are Sounding, a film made by a young director, Leontieff, who has just graduated from the State School of Cinematography. Meshrabpom-Film.





Stampede, a British Instructional Film of African life, made by the Court Treatt expedition and acted throughout by natives. Above, the heroine with the young giraffe whose capture is an important part of the film. Below, waterbuck at the water-hole.





Stampede. The chief and elders marvel at the capture of a water-pyhton. This British Instructional Film has only a modicum of story, dealing with the efforts of the chiefs to secure living for the tribes constantly threatened by famine and drought.



Stampede. Mazumu and her baby, Boru.



Stampede. Boru, who grows up to be the hero of the film.



Two stills from a rediscovered film, *La Voyante*, in which Sarah Bernhardt appeared near the end of her life. Her part in this film was limited to these tragic, masked close ups.





Grace Chiang, whose amazing and poignant acting in Erno Metzner's film, *Achtung, Liebe—Lebensgefahr* (*Where's Love, There's Danger*), has earned her a place in the front rank of the few great artists of the screen.



Monkey's Moon. A Pool film for *Studio Films.* By Kenneth Macpherson.



From *I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside*, a *Studio Film* by Oswald Blakeston.

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technical methods at first, for they are always a sign of development and so also of liveliness. It is also instructive to watch how these must die off, if they are overbred as an expression of themselves, instead of finding the way to lasting contents by suppression of their own. The expression, technics, is civilisation, life of the body and consequently mortal. The contents, the art, is culture, life of the soul and so perhaps immortal.

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These sentences have been perhaps deliberately bumptious, if one considers that it is film that is going to be spoken of. I have got a little bit afraid, too, and so I look into the pages of the programme of both the Stuttgart cinemas that showed the selection of the film-exhibition from the 13th to the 24th of June. What about the immortality there?

But let us leave this difficult word aside and be content with the search for durability. One will surely not find the most permanent works of the film done till to-day, as their collection on one spot for a certain time still must meet the most complicated and most ridiculous difficulties of film-business. But still we find some titles announced in the list, which can be considered as fitting without any discussion. At first I am going to speak only about play-films already known from regular performances. As follows:— *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* by Robert Weine; *Variété* by E. A. Dupont; *Geheimnisse einer Seele* by G. W. Pabst; *Dirnentragödie* with Asta Neilsen—of German origin. *Johanna von Orléans* by C. Dreyer—of French origin. *Zehn Tage, die die Welt erschütterten*, by S. M. Eisenstein; *Die letzten Tage von St. Petersburg* by W.

Pudovkin; Arsenal by *Dovjeko*—of Russian origin. *Zirkus* by *Chaplin*; *Chicago* by *Frank Urson*—of American origin.

From a collaboration so to speak between industrial organisation and modern artists arose the following pictures, some of which can be called documentary films: *The Kipho-Werbefilm* and the *Kreuzworträtsselfilm* by *Guido Seeber*; *Prinz Achmed* by *Lotte Reiniger*; *Die Symphonie einer Grosstadt* by *Walter Ruttmann*; *Inflation* and introduction to *Ariadne* by *Hans Richter*; *Kreislauf des Wassers* by *Robert Blum*; *Die Wunder der Kamera* by *Dr. Edgar Beyfuss*; *Kuddelmuddel* by *Alex Strasser*—of German origin. *Leben in Wassertropfen, Würmer und Seerosen*, by *Mol*—of Dutch origin. *Der Florentiner Hut* by *René Clair* and *L'Isle de Paris* by *Lacombe*—of French origin. *Lenins Wahrheit, Das elfte Jahr, Der sechste Teil der Welt, Kinoauge, Der Mann mit dem Kinoapparat*, by *Dziga Vertoff*; and *Pamir* of Russian origin.

Avantgarde-films in the strict sense of the word *Diagonal Symphonie* by *Viking Eggeling*; *Opus 2—4* by *Walter Ruttmann*—of German origin. *Die Brücke, Regen, Brandung* by *Joris Ivens*—Dutch origin. *Variationen der Ungeduld* by *Dekeukelaire*—of Belgian origin. *Entr'acte* by *René Clair*, *Emak Bakia, Etoile de Mer* by *Man Ray*, *Die Muschel* by *Germaine Dulac*, *Lichter und Schnelligkeiten* by *Beaumont*, *La Marche des Machines* by *Eugène Dezlav*—of French origin. *Leo Tolstoi, Aufstieg*, by *Esther Schub*—of Russian origin.

It would take too much space, should I try to speak about all of these films single and detailed. The first mentioned

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biggest films are presumably generally well known. And the non-German work of the smaller ones is not unknown to the readers of this paper.

The Russian Work of a more recent date will probably make an exception. Such as the monographic pictures cut from old weekly shows by *Esther Schub*, which leave an interesting impression of their object but only a grey one of their quality as a film. *Vertoff's* art of reporting, wilful and based only upon the rhythm of cutting would deserve a special analysis sometime. It is *Dovjenko*, who seems to be the most original and at the same time the most valuable; he transfers Russian naturalism from a symbolic play into power restrained by quietness. It will be possible to come to a conclusion only after all his work stands before us as a whole; Stuttgart only showed cuttings.

Some words still about the German Films shown. Already the director of the first of them, *Viking Eggeling*, was originally a Norwegian painter, who only lived in Germany and made its *Diagonalsymphonie* there. It represents the first attempt at a radical abstract picture. In the way of ornaments of diagonal lines changing in the movement; a play, whose charm is perceivable only in single moments, and that does not touch us otherwise. Quite different the abstract films of *Walter Ruttmann*, that seem even now in a distance of eight years to be the strongest products of their kind. Possibly because the abstraction of those pushing, flashing and sliding geometrical bodies is no more abstraction for it reveals distinct associations with contents. As a third *Hans Richter* coming too from the painters' circles whose optical picture-combinations and distortions were allowed to serve as introductions

and intermezzis for industrial playfilms. In contrast to him—who searched for an eventual expression of technical means, without being able to rule out of them his antecedent—*Guido Seeber* has found shrewd variations for advertising films rising from technics which he playfully commands. *Robert Blum* cuts strange landscape-pictures to a unit of comprehension. *Alex Strasser* finds talented ideas in feuilletonistic contemplation of everyday life for the weekly show. And *Dr. Beyfuss* chooses examples for different kinds of camera-work out of foreign documentary films and weekly shows.

The most striking thing for the contemplator of these films is the fact that they incline towards industrial manufacture in the course of time in an increasing scale. While in America a too vehement film industry suppresses a too weak Avantgarde and in France a too vehement Avantgarde overpowers a too weak industry; in Germany—and it is similar in Russia—a mid-heavy industry seems to mix with a mid-heavy Avantgarde. Here one often likes to grumble about the commercialized production of the German film, which hinders the rising of new ideas and new men; and yet—if we look upon it from the perspective of to-day—it must appear that just in the most brilliant period of film-Germany (between 1921 and 1925) the experimentors, who in other countries had to deal with small and smallish work here found rich opportunity to transfer their revolutionary ambitions into work of greatest style. I not only think of the above-mentioned pictures, *Caligari*, *Variété*, *Geheimnisse einer Seele*, but also of formerly popular films by *Lubitsch*, *Lang*, *Pick* and *Murnau*. The German Avantgarde of these times has found also new contents for new technics, while the French had been

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forced to discover new technics, without their contents ever turning up. The French waited for tasks that never came. They practised for a work which they have expected in vain. They have made reclamations already in every sphere; they searched in all the streets and cul-de-sacs without finding ways, and before all without seeing an aim. They played—sometimes carried by enchanted moods—the most difficult studies. And somebody just passing by in the street also sometime or other caught an ingenious accord, surrounded it by a couplet and became rich. The neighbourhood, the environment, the audience however, got nervous, grumbled and shut its windows, for one could not listen to studies and scales for a long time, even if a Paganini played them. And a Paganini of film does not even exist; and film itself is by no means a violin.

Twelve hours express train—from the train directly changed into a little Stuttgart performance room, in which people who believe themselves Paganinis, play their films and film-studies for hours and hours. Can you wonder now that somebody staggering back into the street with a somewhat dizzy head at dawn had to come to the following conclusions?

It is to be considered as a great merit of the leaders of the Stuttgart Exhibition that they took the great trouble of showing a considerable part of international Avantgarde work in this demonstration, revealing a sectional view. On this occasion one could see, that in the film beyond industry there is as much stuff as in the film within industry,

One perceived how much temperament, spirit and craft had been invested and split up in these little films. One saw that the Avantgarde could claim more right of existence if it

was connected with a whole army behind it—practically or only theoretically. One saw that outpost struggles can be a cute thing, but if they want to fulfil their purpose they need a system, a plan. Which is lacking to-day.

A. KRASZNA-KRAUSZ.

VERTOFF, HIS WORK AND THE FUTURE

As one of the most significant events of the year there comes to my mind Frankfurt and Dsiga Vertoff at a matinée explaining the theory of the *Kinoki*, (the kino-eye) of which he is the inventor, not in words alone, but with the help of clear and beautiful examples of his work amply demonstrating his ability to translate his theory into practice. *Kinoki* is unposed, unplayed film, independent both of actors and of studio. Vertoff watches human expressiveness, gestures, incidents, and when he succeeds in surprising these at their characteristic moments he registers them and produces results that are extraordinarily valuable.

But this is not enough for him. In his last film, *The Man with the Movie-camera*, he shows us the ropes of artistic creation. When he has aroused our emotions and carried us away with a powerful scene, he shows the operator filming the scene or the montress joining the strips of film.

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One might imagine that his films can be no more than intelligent reporting. They are nothing of the kind. They are complete creations. And Vertoff, moreover, in what he calls *Radioki*, (the eye of the radio) presented sound before speech-films had been heard of. He has some remarkable ideas as to the future of the cinema: foreseeing the time, which he believes not far distant, when films will be presented not only in colour and relief and with the odours proper to what is shown, but also telepathically. A film *thought*, for example by Vertoff himself, would appear simultaneously upon all the screens in the world, probably by that time installed in private apartments rather than in public cinemas. The forecasts of this genius (I am chary of the word but in this instance its full meaning is applicable) seem fantastic until we take the trouble of considering them carefully, when the possibility of their realisation becomes undeniable.

Vertoff will have nothing of films he classes as theatrical, that is to say films acted either by professionals or others.

The ingenuity of his method is worthy of illustration by an example of his work. On one occasion he was taking shots in an all-night cabaret. Naturally anxious to disguise his operations he explained to the clientèle the presence of strange lamps by telling them that the management wished to experiment with a fresh lighting system and that later on a film would be taken. While the many "experiments" were being made his camera-men were at work. One was in the street just outside a window, another concealed in the roofing and a third, using an automatic camera, pretended to help the electrician to shift the lamps, and registered

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everything indicated by Vertoff. When at last the company supposed a picture was about to be taken, Vertoff and his assistants made off. He had secured all he wanted. The possibilities of this method are immediately evident and I need not insist upon the vital sincerity of the resultant strips. Vertoff is, moreover, a past master in the art of the angle of vision, partly no doubt because the nature of his work moves him to take almost unconsciously exactly the right, intelligible point of view. And upon this I would lay stress because for some time past all the incapable film directors have been gleefully on the look-out for interesting angles; an absurdity the more irritating for the pretentiousness of its origin. One is reminded in this connection of G. W. Pabst whose camera angles are ruled by rigorous necessity: by the logic of the action. Hence the enchanting, magnificent power of his films.

In the evening I was glad of the opportunity of talking to Vertoff, for my sincere admiration of his ideas does not exclude certain reservations. His films, in my opinion, must necessarily be limited. There are, for example, certain emotions which his method, repudiating artifice, is incapable of handling. I suggested to him the following scene: a woman in a darkened room at night, tormented by her thoughts. How, without special lighting, could such a scene be registered? After a brief hesitation he extricated himself: "I cannot discuss all my methods. They would be imitated by other producers." This, I fancy was a jest. Vertoff knows that such a scene could be produced only in a studio. He admitted besides that the emotional film does not interest him. So be it. But the limitation is incon-

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testable. The problems and conflicts which we call "emotional," are of enormous importance in our lives and no form of artistic expression can ignore them.

Vertoff is wrong in setting these aside. His method is that of a formidable genius and his ideas for the future of the cinema are consistent and, in my opinion, logical and matter-of-course. Nevertheless he is mistaken in inferring that the set scenes and deliberate contrivances of to-day are on the wrong track and that producers will sooner or later accept his formula for cinematic creation. His attitude is understandable when one realises the difficulties he has encountered and still encounters in the way of driving home the importance of his idea. His work is surrounded by an uncomprehending silence. Hardly anyone outside Russia has yet seen his films. And I am convinced that when he is free to pursue his ideas to the uttermost he will at once recognise that his system can never be the sole means of visual creation. As it is he is forced to some extent to be unfaithful to his own theory in so far as he uses projectors and montage. For montage at least introduces the personal element, wilful interference with the raw material. Moreover, the direct, unacted film is a simplification deriving from literature, and Vertoff rejects the literary cinema.

But of more importance than all the battles of the theorists is the fact that a cinematic genius of the first order is at work in Vertoff. The suppleness of his technique is simply stupefying, his sense of montage and the rhythmic value of images is perfect. The silent film, apparently at the end of its resources, has much to learn from him though I will not go so far as to say that his films shake my confidence

CLOSE UP

in speech-films; and he himself is waiting only for the evolution of a reliable apparatus for registering sound to give us a speech-film for which we may well wait in all eagerness—not only for the pleasure to be derived from it, but for the tremendous forward impetus it will give to the conception of the uses of sound in film.

JEAN LENAUER.

A TALK ON TECHNIQUE

A.B.C. OF THE NEW CINEMA.

Commercial cameramen still refuse to regard *need* as *opportunity*. Lights have to be changed for close ups: lamps are pushed in.

A director, under the influence of Eisenstein's visit to England, might be encouraged to alter his camera angle for each flash, but, if his cameraman is the usual commercial harridan, unenterprising lighting will place a patina over the montaged reels. There is only one man, working in England, who is alive to the fact that each time the camera is moved there is a chance for a new lighting effect. Without levitation, or delphic inspiration, he is carrying out some really excellent work. He is interested in his job, that is his whole secret.

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Maculose fragments of print, worn out by eager fingers, show some careful light-painting in close up. The usual spotlight plays on the back of the hair, but not with that alarming halo effect, and a spotlight on the ground, screened by the back of the actress herself, catches a high light under a cheek bone. Another spotlight, covered with a silk, is trained on the right side of the face, and re-enforced with "inkies" spread in a semi-circle so that the intensity of light on the face becomes appreciably less towards the mouth and nose. To break up the shadows a fourth spotlight, also silked, shoots over the camera, catching the glint in the eyes of the woman and faintly illuminating the left side of the face, which, otherwise, is in shadow. This one example proves individual lighting, which means thought and results in a sculpturally moulded piece of portraiture, the graded shadow giving a remarkably stereoscopic appearance to the pose.

Mr. Basil Emmott is one of the few personalities in the world of British cinematographic photography. He flew with Cobham to the Cape; he was the first to use incandescent lighting seriously in this country, apart from "inkies" on close ups; he went to America to study all the methods, systems, innovations connected with the future of the coloured, sonorous, and stereoscopic cinema. Such varied, and distinguished, experiences have made him a man of value to film directors, journalists and brain-picking amateurs.

"If," Mr. Emmott said to me, "England wants to make a conquest of the world's film market, LABORATORIES must be built. The Americans believe that the money is in the negative—and so it is—and they treat it with respect."

CLOSE UP

In an almost frenetic manner he denounced the dust holes which, in most cases, do duty for laboratories in this country. As an immediate solution he suggested that all studios, over here, pool their resources and build something up-to-date, something to equal the marvellously efficient Consolidated Film Laboratories of New York where seven and a half million feet of stock are developed, and printed, each week.

As far as the mechanics of production are concerned Mr. E. believes England could hold her own. He witnessed several films in production in U.S.A., that is he noticed several leading ladies sitting on directors' knees!

"England's special failing is mental stinginess. Many of New York's supers are four times the size of our latest "atmospheric", yet the seating capacity, in most cases, is no larger. People don't tread on your toes at the Roxy. And do you know that the factory of General Electric gives work to twenty-three thousand hands?"

All very impressive, and not a word about New York's skyline, iced water, or central heating, not even a quotation from Beverley Nichols. Maybe he was too anxious to tell me how America was going to get away with colour before England had time to say G. K. Atkinson.

Ideas of splitting the film into two or three sections, for natural colour processes, are, he holds, unsatisfactory. When a fourth of the screen is enlarged, to fill the whole area, the grain becomes correspondingly magnified. Wider stock, would, of course, present a solution but immolate thousands of small exhibitors. Sometimes the small men are willing to buy, seldom to scrap.

Then, reaching for intelligence, I asked him about arc

CLOSE UP

lights, long shots, the resultant heat of incandescent lighting.

"America is going back to arcs. Flood lighting and small effects, like splashing a small lamp across bricks to raise them from the wall, are the legitimate employment for the modern "inkies", back lighting calls for economic arcs."

The commutator hum, which occurs across an arc, can be removed by means of suitable chokes, each being fitted separately to the lamp according to the voltage.

Anyway, he is using arcs on his new talkie, and he does not expect trouble. He was the first to have the courage to abolish telephoto lenses, shooting talkies in continuity and thereby obtaining the correct level of voices of the actors, so a little of this sort of thing is expected of him!

O. B.

SECOND-RATE SEX, SEPTEMBER, 1929

A report on ABORT, by NORMA MAHL.

Hark, Mr. Douglas—here's a tub for thumping!

Fie, other bats! Why sleep with belfries bumping?

How can the Book Club breathe when now so near

Free-thinkers rip all London holds most dear,

CLOSE UP

And in her chastest hall, given to recitals,
Probe at her heart, her blood, her very vitals?
Yes, softly, quietly, at the Whigmore Hall
Talkers deliberate. Sure, it's the Season's fall!

It is, quite literally. Dull foliage flies,
And trees, themselves again, greet clearing skies.
So, just as eagerly as leaves, there caper
Experts in sex to this staid, draper-
Hid, library-smothered hall,
Blowing up leaves that anyway would fall.
Leaves of convention, clogging man's clean roots,
Taking the sap from free gonadic shoots.
Lectures, discussions—then a film to show.
We feel that's right. We link. And so we go,
Thinking film-conscious bodies can't be so
Pompous as we may feel; a screen-sense means they *know*.

We go, quite earnest; not to leer, but learn,
And if as yet we love not, still we yearn,
And though we mayn't believe, we hope and pray
With them that every dogma's had its day.
So to confront the night of ignorance, we creep
Waving old beacons lit by twilight sleep,
Dreaming on earth for a terrestrial heaven
Where life's clock no more stands at sex to seven.
Sure, we agree. The League must win our thanks,
Who see a good case can come from its planks.
Gravely and bravely, we run dinner to tea;
For the good cause, set psycho-sail to see.

CLOSE UP

Much secrecy. The film cannot be shown.
(Ordinary precaution might this much have known.
Why do the people we would most exhort
Burn, for enthusiasm, elementary thought?
Can they be, then, in touch, with this to learn
Of english censors? Ssh, it's we who learn)
Much secrecy. A film behind closed doors,
Reached by a flying squad of free conspirators.
We'd heard the trouble, felt the frill of fuss
And seen by Marble Arch, a private 'bus
Taking them forth to Revelation's screen,
Ambushed abortively in West Fourteen.

We follow, are arrived. A studio
Mentally "little Art" . . . orange, you know.
Figure in car outside says "to the left"
(Like thugs in thalking thilms of thin and theft).
A famous specialist greets us, dress-reformed;
Once more into the breeches we have stormed.

A flaxen female, stressed in red foularde,
Proves you can still be feminine and hard.
We notice spinsters, busy making hay
From withered grass none cut while it was May.
Phyl, who wed Will, would float around with Sidney,
Who'd find love free, but for a floating kidney;
Next her, an Indian, who'd love *all* with freedom
If they would only recognise his he-dom;
Scrawny old men, devoid of sex at all,
But thinking this should let them lead the ball,

CLOSE UP

And angry Workers who see one more luxury
They're bound to miss, in all this love and uxor-y.
Doubtful unwillingly, we crane our necks
To find some other sons to light up sex.
Alas, alas, for ardent aspiration
Hirschfeld himself would find but perspiration.
There's no electric thrill, no central heat;
A few cold shoulders and some frozen feet.
They look unhappy—cannot be the best,
Surely? How can one fight if one's repressed?
They've never had a sexual life at all,
With libidos a kitten-ravelled ball
Played with inside a buttoned, hook-nosed lip;
Their utmost stride, we feel, is but a slip.
Ssh, don't let's generalise. Let's wait and see.
These may be grim for battle. They *may* be—maybe.
But why DO those whose programme is "Be Free"
Use the imperative always of "to be?"
There should be more than these; the thing is *right*,
Sex must be freed from its pre-Shavian night,
And so on, so on—all the things we find
We've held and practised years long, undefined.
But then, of course, we aren't the ones to reach;
It's the great masses all this talk must teach.
Why aren't they here, then? Why not THIS or, *that*,
The cream or daily bread. Not this lean ham, pressed flat,
Trying to live 'twixt the two these represent?
It's all this play at pioneer I so resent.
All this loose energy, with a different name,
That makes sex just another amateur game

CLOSE UP

For those who once joined groups for plehs and pomes
Now to produce, haphazardly, hormones.
Regard our prophets. Half in shorts and shirts,
The rest in evening bows and last-train skirts,
Neither at home in either. Ah, well, here's for your hopes!
Love laughs at Goldsmith—he who'd conquer, Stopes.

The lights dim prematurely. Ssh, *that* word!
It'll stamp you retrogressive if you're heard.
The lights go out. This time they're meant to. Here
Is the Abortion film, so raise a cheer.
A chair? No! No, ABORTION. Can't you hear?
"Not very well . . . heredity . . . in one ear".
The film starts, after a russian doctor's said
It shows the harmful way to bring to bed
But not the right, germany won't allow it
(And it's a german copy). Why, then, show it?
Rather confusing shots of factory hands
Reading a notice. No one understands.—
It's out of focus. Don't let's ask too much
(How we repress ourselves here!). Ah, one expert touch
Has brought the frames right. Something. Still it's
queer . . .

But that a girl's expectant is quite clear.
She leaves the table, holding handkerchief. Feels sick.
Expert in audience, "nausea". Rather quick?
And can't we guess it? Is this what we learn?
Ever heard this then . . . in fainting, feathers burn.
You know it already? Shame, then! Turn him out,
He's only come to put us all to rout.

CLOSE UP

Girl buys a book, where diagrams proclaim
The flowering of the fruit that was Eve's shame.
One has not come to look at something pleasant
But surely these would wound an adolescent,
Put him off any sex-life? Visual probes,
These large, cold diagrams; they'd set up phobes.

The woman thinks, and pays a midwife visit
And all's all right or wait a moment is it?
This is a russian film they keep repeating
(And that means auto-love for them at the first meeting.
One must love russian films, one has been told,
And pass the faults, because it's six years old;
Also must murmur " it's a german copy "
Prattle's a drug more potent than red poppy).
Midwife again. Illegal operation.
Borne to the hospital in consternation
Desperation . . students round like flies . . .
And while the case is told them, patient dies . . .
A student finds a handkerchief and cries . . .
CAN this be russian. Film breaks, amid sighs.
Lights please. The screen's moved. Really, what's more
free

Than move an entire screen when you can't see
As this strange woman did, while we all wait?
An expert explains. " Emulsion on the gate ".
He's kidding us? O, no. Kid liver oil . . .
Where was I now? O, yes, the goil.
She's dead, through ignorance and kiss.
Really! We ask, what do we learn from this

CLOSE UP

We haven't learnt before? Think of *The Son*,
Der Gelbe Pass, *Village of Sin*, that other one,
Trois dans un Sous-sol, *Bed and Sofa* here . . .

We ask it seriously, shunning the easy sneer.

What do we see we haven't seen before?

Why give these babes on jerries this encore?

These tedious views of children being dressed!

Why in this film, when they're in all the rest?

Did they take feet and feet of this and put it in

Whenever any film was looking thin?

Why bring it over here, when there're these others

So much more modern, teaching more to mothers

Of every class? Are we just snobs, to lord

We who have seen the new ones, when they can't afford

To visit Berlin (it is SO expensive?)

Maybe. But freedom is extensive,

And they who would set forth to re-chart sex

Should sail new ships, not fit out the old wrecks.

If we're reforming, let us get the best

To push our point, not have to be confessed

As being amateur, behind the times . . .

Slack out-of-dateness is, of modern crimes,

The worst to those who in the vanguard work;

To skim the ground you'd till is but to shirk

And seeds that should be sterile all you sow

If you refuse to take the time to *know*.

Even *Theresa* does a greater thing,

And old *Potëmkin* takes it in its wing,

Covering it by its attitude of mind:

CLOSE UP

One knows, there, what in everything to find.
What do they find here? What's their attitude?
They laugh at semen, not to think it rude,
And when a plan shows how the midwife slipped
A smothered shriek comes forth from thin-lipped
(And full-lipped, too) who knew—that's why they came—
What they might think they'd see. Think of the name,
ABORTION.

Let us pretend it's over, let us go
Before we lose what we already know.
We have learnt nothing. Still our instinct's right . . .
We KNEW before, all we have seen to-night.
AND *we've* seen films before; we get no kick
Watching a hand projector fail and flick.
No film that's real film, knowledge. Therefore what,
In the name of sexiness, have we got?
Pictures of spinsters (Radclyffes or with hair)
Waving a torch they flyblow, in the air,
Feeling they're full, if not of do, of dare.
Already they're "arrested". Why then care
For all this dignified discomfort? Spare
Us from freedom with its rusty "must";
Rather let laws tell us some loves are lust,
Rather still let us "sin" beneath the rose . . .
There's ample shade beneath for one who knows.

The film of sex-reform is this and nothing more.
The screen's no window, but a shabby door
With students, spinsters staring through the hole
At what, if they were useful, they'd see whole.

CLOSE UP

Students and specialists, earnest in *their* way,
Thinking a peasant's pamphlet's meant for such as they,
Accepting this, because they do NOT know,
As the best the educational film can show.
They've got their magic lantern, and like the marm
They're out against, don't see that it can harm
If it's allowed to teach its lessons badly.
Brain—brain reform is what is needed, sadly.

But no, perhaps not. If this is what they do,
It's something brain and taste must not go through.
Reform's a form of canning. Sex is tinned,
Free and preserved, but stale. We need the wind
And earth between it (leaves in season's Fall)
And life to embrace it, not a concert-hall.
"Love's better as it is"—that from the Co'gress.
Giggly? No, giddy, dear. We've made SUCH progress.
NORMA MAHL.

"THE AMATEUR CONVENTION"

The National Convention of Amateur Cinematograph Societies which was held in London at the end of October achieved certain positive results which should materially help in strengthening and developing the amateur movement in Britain.

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Chief among the decisions arrived at by the delegates was the resolution to establish a central body to which all amateur societies can affiliate. Each affiliated society will have one or more representatives, according to strength, on the General Council of the central body.

An immediate plan of work was arranged for the central organisation. It was decided to establish a film library, each society which places one film at the disposal of the library receiving one film from every other society doing the same. In this way every local society will be able to study the work of all the other amateur societies.

Under the control of the central body a technical bureau is to be formed, which will advise and help the affiliated societies on all technical matters relating to their work. Other decisions arrived at were to establish *Amateur Films* as the official organ of the movement, to make the National Convention an annual event, and to organise a national scenario competition. The convention also decided to commence a campaign aiming at the exclusion from import duty of all films on sub-standard stock.

Delegates from some twenty societies were represented at different stages of the Convention, including representatives from a number of provincial societies. The programme of the Convention was interesting and useful. After the delegate sessions in the morning demonstrations of different kinds of apparatus, film stock, etc., were given, followed in the evenings by papers and discussions on various aspects of the amateur movement, and the projection of amateur productions.

The greatest fault of the Convention, however, was

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its failure to work out a definite *function* for the amateur movement. What path is the amateur movement to tread? Is it to imitate Hollywood? Is it to follow blindly the box-office ideas of the professional studios? Or is it to work out a theory and practice of its own which will be as different from the average professional conception of the Cinema as chalk is from cheese?

In other words, will the amateur regard the Cinema as a toy or as a serious, intelligent art?

These are questions which the Convention did not satisfactorily answer. In so far as they were answered by the films submitted for the competitions, the prospect is not encouraging.

Three films may be taken as illustrations. First, *The Rejuvenation of Reggie*, by the Newcastle Society. Here was a perfectly futile production with baronial halls as the background, and the people who are supposed to live in them as the characters. And yet Newcastle is right in the heart of the Durham and Northumberland coalfields, and surrounded by shipyards and engineering factories. A giant industrial district, affording an enormous wealth of human material which the professional never dreams of tapping. Yet the Newcastle Society apparently ignores all this, and has to waste good film stock on material which is valueless. They have for their work a field rich in possibilities, and they don't take it.

The Emperor's Sapphire, by the Southport A.C.A. is yet another example of what not to do. Three perfectly good reels of film wasted on the sort of blood-and-thunder stuff Hollywood did ten times better ten years ago. Similar

criticism could be levelled at the five reel Thanet A.C.A. production, *The Secret of the Tunnel*, in which the customary story of dope fiends, dope smugglers, shots in the dark, secret service agents and detectives is chosen. While all praise is due to much of the astonishingly good lighting and photographic effects—particularly in the interior sets—does the Thanet A.C.A. really think that *The Secret of the Tunnel* will help the amateur movement in any way at all to do something really worth while?

The decision of the Convention to organise the scattered forces of the amateur was all to the good; so also was the growing realisation that the amateur must aim at working with standard instead of sub-standard stock; but of greater importance than these is the imperative necessity for the amateur societies to sit down and think what they are going to do.

Stolen sapphires, dope smuggling and train wrecks are not the sum total of mankind's experiences. These are trivial occurrences. But, there are a million unemployed in Britain; there is intense poverty and vast wealth existing side by side; there are appalling slums and luxurious mansions; there are gigantic social conflicts; every other week or so (as Mr. Herring once pointed out) we read of pit disasters which shatter the lives of men and women. Do these things mean nothing to the amateur?

Go to any mining village, go to the textile centres in Lancashire and Yorkshire, to the slums of Glasgow, to the docks and wharves in the East End of London, and there you will find raw, human living material, material for countless cinema epics.

CLOSE UP

Here is a field for the amateur which will make him the equal of the professional, despite the financial and technical wealth of the movie trusts.

R. BOND.

A CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

We bought an English Newmann Sinclair camera and twenty-four pounds' worth of film, in London. We held English passports. And we sailed from Immingham on an English steamer, bound for Iceland and Spitzbergen.

We did not sleep one night away from the boat during our entire trip so that we might almost claim technically not to have left British soil. But we photographed some Icelandic seals and the coast line of Spitzbergen. So if we had declared our film in the ordinary manner on our return to Immingham, we should have had to pay roughly fifty pounds in duty on the twenty-four pounds' worth of negative.

So we applied for a certificate of approval.

It will never happen again. I always disliked smuggling, but I have had my lesson. Honesty does not pay.

It took two letters, a personal visit to the Customs department, the production of evidence that we were British citizens and several telephone calls, to obtain the certificate before

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sailing. (Warning : at least ten days should be allowed for the task.)

Our film was packed, sealed, and a mysterious sealed envelope handed to us, to be given to the Customs officer before sailing.

The first hitch occurred when he could not be discovered and we almost lost the boat, looking for him.

We cruised North and exposed the film. Then we return to England.

The Customs official was there when we landed. He could not be persuaded that we had not bought the film in Norway. He confiscated our certificate of approval and the film and we came to London with the foolish hope of securing a commercial success by showing two reels of " ICE " in a heat wave. It was on July 25th.

Between July 25th and September 11th the following incidents occurred :—

1. We wrote ten letters to the shipping agents handling articles for the Bonded Warehouse.
2. Gave a bond for £137 0s. 0d., which they estimated was the value of the film. Actually, as we had no contract for exhibition, it was worth only twenty-four pounds the cost of the negative.
3. Filled up three forms.
4. Gave full particulars of our life history and a cheque for expenses to the shippers of £1 2s. 7d.
5. Were told it would be sent to the Bonded Warehouse, who would notify us in writing of its arrival.
6. Waited ten days.

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7. Telephoned Bonded Warehouse who first reproached us for not having claimed it previously and then refused to move further in the matter until the certificate of approval was forthcoming, which they admitted had been lost at the Customs. After we had waited still another four days and written once more to shippers it was discovered.
8. We were ordered to attend at the Bonded Warehouse with two householders.
9. We looked for two householders (not an easy job when attendance had to be made during business hours) and arrived at Bonded Warehouse.
10. The two householders each gave a bond for thirty-five pounds that we were not habitual criminals and would not steal the film during process of development.
11. We were sent to Camden Town from Endell Street to pay one pound at the office there as fee for attendance of officer to break seals before the film could be developed.
12. We returned to Endell Street, deposited passport photographs as proof of identity and were permitted to take the box of film in a taxi to the developing firm. This was an agonising journey for we were warned as we left the Bonded Warehouse that if the seal got broken we should be liable, together with the householders, for heavy fines or imprisonment. The taxi seemed more reckless and the seal more fragile every minute of the trip. We suggest it as ideal material

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for a comic—or a tragic—scenario. It is not, however, to be commended for the nerves of the actors.

13. Telephoned attendance officer at Charing Cross Road that film had been developed and made arrangements that film had been deposited and made arrangements

14. We were notified that the film had been developed and returned to Bonded Warehouse.

15. We attended at Bonded Warehouse and were sent with a paper to Camden Town.

16. Paid the duty at Camden Town of three pounds one shilling.

17. We returned to Endell Street with receipt and paid eleven and sixpence warehouse charges.

18. We were then permitted to remove film on September 26th, exactly two months after we had landed at Immingham.

The reason given for all these elaborate precautions was that we might have hired an American star to come from Hollywood and be photographed in a bathing suit against Icelandic cliffs.

We were told that most of the English film companies, even when entitled to a reduction of duty, pay the full amount rather than deal with the unending complexities of a certificate of approval and it is even rumoured that a cameraman who accompanied an English explorer, spent so long in getting his film released at the finish, that the explorer had made another journey, so that the film was no longer of topical interest.

But it seems absurd for English people to have to pay the full rate of fivepence a foot (which gives immediate

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possession of the negative) on film bought in England and brought back to be developed. And it must surely be harmful to the industry. There are, for instance, some excellent English cinema cameras, but who is going to buy one when it can never be taken abroad? The big film companies pay the full duty and take what they want away. It is the scientist making a record of little or no commercial value who is penalized by these petty regulations.

If it is required to retain them, why cannot they be simplified? Why cannot the smaller rate of duty be paid immediately by those travellers in possession of a certificate of authority, at the port of landing. Or if the film must be seen at the Bonded Warehouse, why cannot it be sent direct from the port to a firm for developing without the six or seven weeks delay, while it is sent from Customs to Customs? And again, why cannot all payments be made at Endell Street, instead of having to take each paper to Camden Town and back?

Without organisation little is possible but this is surely a matter for all film societies in England. There is a movement to obtain exemption from duty of sub-standard stock. But standard stock is essential for the scientist and the experimental film society and while it may be necessary to impose a small duty (though this is questionable) at least steps should be taken to make the payment of it immediate and to obviate, in the interests of the industry in general, as well as of the traveller, these annoying and hampering restrictions and delays.

BRYHER.

TURKSIB

One could say "here is a beautiful film" but would that answer? One could say "here is slickness, invention, innovation, carried to its logical conclusion". One could add "plus ingenuity". There would still be left untabulated the chief ingredient. Take slickness, ingenuity, invention, innovation—polish them. At one time you might have achieved a Venus with a silver belly, at another period of innovation, a German helmet. Take the two; melt, smelt, re-weld. You get something quite new, quite different, a new form, not so much growing out of the old, as projected from it, not so much the fruit of the blossom as some new substance that is neither fruit nor blossom yet indis-severable from both fruit and blossom and the original tree stock. Take the new art-form. It has nothing to do with sculpture nothing to do with music. Take *Turksib*.

I like *Turksib*.* *Turksib* is the name of a railway, Turkistan-Siberia, or the name of a particular engine if you prefer it. *Turksib* anyhow has personable dimension. Take any railway, from time immemorial and recall what you can of it. For myself, there is a series of deplorable mid-Victorian images, the little blue engine stamp that appeared on one's grandfather's old letters, a print of a gentleman in

* A Vostik-Kino film, directed by V. Turin.

CLOSE UP

peg-top trousers and a lady in a crinoline, a deplorable toy engine steaming out from somewhere, toward something. Modernized, this becomes Buster Keaton and *The General*.

Buster Keaton and *The General* humanized the railway, made personifiable a certain railway and a particularized 1860 (or to be exact 1864ish) sort of engine. *The General* made us laugh—so much for *The General*. *The General* emerged, a personified engine, a character, standing out among countless meaningless memories of film engines that crash and smash, that swerve, and curve, that creak and break, that jug-jug-jug across prairies and the veldt, and puff-puff-puff obligingly into stations to crash, for instance, into the mild-eyed Greta Garbo with the somewhat unrecognisable attributes of Anna Kerenina.

There was another engine into which Conrad Veidt also walked the other day, speaking actually into its very nose. "Emmeline" was what he was saying (or "Eveline"). With the exception of *The General* these engines oddly had no personality in spite of or because of the very "engines of wrath" which they presumably symbolised. Anna Kerenina wronged her engine, so did Conrad Veidt his, actually having the temerity—a talkie—to address it. Yet "Emmeline" after all, when one comes to think of it, is not at all a bad sort of name for that particular sort of maligned film engine.

Humanity has been maligned, so why not, you may well ask, an engine? Well, why not? Perhaps we never realised how badly humanity in general had suffered at the hands of the film-producers until we saw it dignified, humanised, rehabilitated in our first "real" films. There is no use going

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back to *Joyless Street*, certain phases of *Jeanne Ney*, and the first prodigy of *Mother*. We know there that people moved, acted, suffered, we might almost say for the first time, not parodies of people, at best ghosts, but spirits. Living spirits moved with a suavity and despair that no stage since has ever given us. We saw decisively that the stage had crippled vision.

Take thought. Take thought for its own sake. Say "I will personify, I will dramatise." The cube projected, the flight of fancy that inverts the skyscraper and balances the sardine tin in pseudo-geometric frenzy on a superimposed series of translucent shoe-horns, is not (obvious truism) a symptom so much of dimensional as of demented psychology. Yet we had to have shoe-horns, had for a time to accept the beauty of the parallel planes of the sardine-tins, had ourselves to gyrate and jibber thus-wise just to see how things looked upside down and to convince ourselves we weren't missing anything. Take *Turksib*.

We have here what we knew all the time was here. We knew of course as well as anybody that the sardine-tin wasn't final. We knew the shoe-horn didn't mean anything, wasn't even a personable shoe-horn. We knew as well as anybody that eventually the Pickford must shear her curls, like any Iphigenia, on the altar of her immolation.

Well, East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet, did and had to do (like the fabulous, romantic Pickford Golden Fleece) for an older generation. But "all things flow," we are told. Thought is never static. It creeps, it seeps, it crawls in just where you don't expect it. Why Russia, you may well ask, why Soviet Russia?



A beautiful example of photographic art, by Hans Casparius, taken during the filming of Pabst's *White Hell of Piz Palü*, a film made in conjunction with Dr. Arnold Fanck in the Swiss mountains.



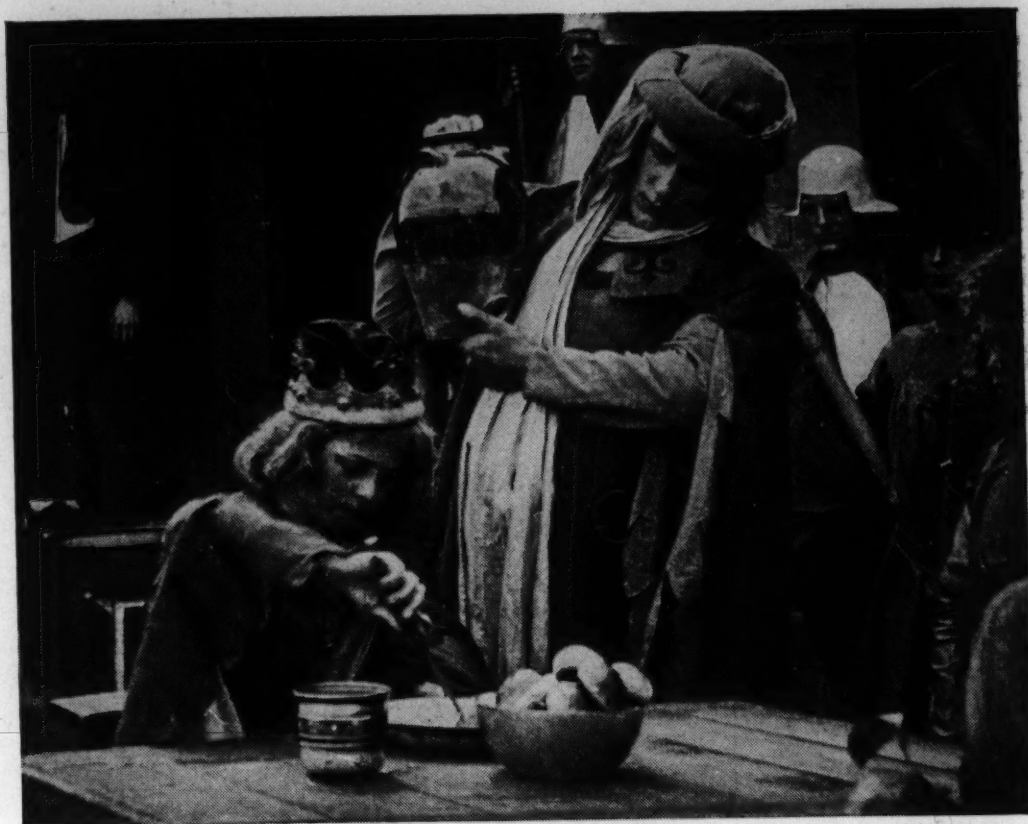
Another *werk-photo* by Hans Casparius, from the *White Hell of Pix Palü*.



A Hans Casparius composition, taken during the filming of Metzner's *Where's Love There's Danger*.



A new Man With a Movie Camera. Hans Casparius again is responsible for this vigorous study of Eduard von Borsody. In our next issue we will devote an article to the work of Casparius in photography and film.



The Glittering Sword (see Comment and Review)—a film new made by Ronald Gow with the boys of Altrincham School.





Turksib (Turkestan-Siberian Railroad). See article of that name in this issue.



A corner of the property room of the Sovkino Leningrad studios, containing a collection of the parade regalia of the former ministers and nobility,—to be found now only in the property rooms of studios and theatres.



Nanicher. One of the Tunghi. A Siberia-Kino production, directed by Bolshintzoff.



From a village film, *Whirlpool*, by Petroff-Bitoff for Sovkino. Artiste : Guretzkaya.



連日
天映起

陰曆
月

海角詩人

The Rose of Pu Chui. One of the striking posters designed by Lapthorn, who uses a method of "pictorial criticism." Her work has aroused considerable attention, and has gained



A "pictorial criticism" of *Broadway*. By Laphorn.

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Thought was ever the liberated, it never acted, never functioned except in freedom. It is permeable, permanent, (like lists in the old Orphic Hymn, one could go on almost forever) indivisible, indestructable. That personified Lady stands (or stood) outside the portals of Delphi in the old days. Stood there, for artistic creation is nothing, no "acceptable sacrifice" without intellectual habiliments. Take *Turksib*.

Just why? Well, we have subtlety, innovation, polish, real and singular cool beauty—*Turksib*, a railway, an engine, seems a being almost in this film, god or goddess, having power to inspire awe, love, a subtle innovation, the very silver belly of Venus and the helmet of modernized Mars, welded, a thing of destruction, of creation. Not created, just adequately made, healing our avid, overstrained nerves (appearing after that terrible Aescuylean "creation" *Arsenal*) with exquisite finality. Here you have a film of a railroad, of the making of an engine, perfect in nuance of superimposition, drawing-board tracteries, abstraction of T-square and ruler and numerical statistics, dotted lines. "Thought," one wanted to shout aloud, "is here for the first time adequately projected," just as one wanted to shout aloud in *Joyless Street*, "here for the first time are people". These are not images made artificially but thought itself, seen for the first time, in actual progression.

These images are not projected after they have been manufactured. We watch thought itself, thought-progression, not man's thought truly, but the subtle silver-thought of some Hellenic trickster.

Hermes tricked, lied, hid, flew, walked, played a flute and

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a lyre. He was not primarily an artist, not the fiery creator, not the suave physical creator, but a trickster, a daemon. Silver and cold and beautiful we seem to be watching the super-thought of some such god, throughout this film, from the first breaking up of the ground in the deep hot low plains of Turkestan back to the draughtman's board, again to the desert and the mountains. Desert and mountains merge into the cool poise of a master-pencil, pen, map and transparent paper, dotted lines, geometric abstraction, wheels of the future line of carriages, bits of metal in precise pattern, again fields and caravans. Sledges of the far divergent Siberian frontiers of the same plan, the snow and the sledges melt in exquisite superimposition on to apparently the same dazzling silver-white, but here, desert-sand. Vision sweeps, we move, invisible, are ourselves gifted with invisibility and wear about our worthless ankles the very sandal straps of the god Messenger. We are ourselves almost too deeply involved with the beauty and the miracle of sheer thought transfiguration to realize what a stride forward *art* has taken, *film* art if you wish to deride and to deify that much maligned abstraction.

H. D.

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MOVIE: NEW YORK NOTES

I shall not speak of Hollywood in these notes, except as it refers to my province¹¹⁹, New York. I believe it is time the movie found other locales. Perhaps the talkie will help that. Paramount has a studio at Astoria on Long Island, within greater New York, and Mr. Monta Bell, who was educated with Charlie Chaplin, is director. That is still Hollywood in derivation, but Mr. Rouben Mamoulian, who directed *Porgy* for the Theatre Guild, has made a film at Astoria, *Applause*, and Mr. Mamoulian may be included in our New York school.

Not only I have felt the need for another school than Hollywood. Sven Gade, returning to Europe from the western Paradise, declares: "That just as it was inevitable that the movie should have sought the sun of California, it is now essential that it return to the east. It is now too far from the cultural, critical center of American life." You may read the full story in *Der Querschnitt*, January 1929.

I have not yet seen *Applause*, but in subsequent Notes I shall tell you what I think of it. In the meantime I am quoting from the words of Mr. Monta Bell the supervising director of the studios, and from those of Mr. Rouben Mamoulian, director of the film itself. The comments of the

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two men are very interesting and very enlightening, if not entirely novel to the readers of *Close Up*, who have not just begun to hear about the contrapuntal organization of sound and sight in the "audible film," as our New York reviewers now call the talkies. But these observations coming from America may promise something. Therefore, I take the trouble and liberty of quoting them.

Monta Bell writes in the Motion Picture (September) number of the *Theatre Arts Monthly* on "The Director" in relation to the new compound cinema. He says: "I feel like an amateur in my own business. . . . I believe that the director of silent pictures is far in advance of his brother director of stage-productions, as we both approach his new medium. . . . At the time I came East I did not like talking pictures. I do not like them to-day. . . . If some one company had the courage—perhaps it would have taken a very rash courage—to hold aloof from the hysteria that brought these things about so rapidly—to produce only silent pictures during the year, I am not sure but that they might have found a considerable market for these same silent pictures. However, that is past. Talking pictures are here and here to stay." Mr. Bell came East though he disliked sound—not a happy confession, but most talkies seem to have been made by people who disliked them—and Mr. Bell had several theories: that a talkie was still a movie, that sound and speed used to enhance the movie was the right way for the talkie. He quotes from an article written a year previously for *The North American Review*, which he is all the more convinced is accurate. In that article he said: ". . . that which the eye sees is the chief attraction of the

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screen." An image held too long for the sake of sound is tedious; the screen should be made "continuously interesting." Directors are recognizing this. Bell suggested a year ago a number of devices now being used whose intention is not the synchronization of the sound with the issuer of the sound, but of sound from one source with an image not issuing the sound: in other words, non-coincidence of sound and image. He points out in his current article that directors now know it isn't the thing to have too much speech. He points to *Applause* as an instance of the correct compound: no unnecessary speech, dialogue and sound effects for the movement of the film. Bell sees the director as a writer, making his own transcription; and the writer who can manage people, he recognizes as a potential director.

Rouben Mamoulian has this to say about his film *Applause*: "The picture that you will see is an example of the perambulating camera along with the ordinary use of the microphone, an instrument that is not as yet a selective earpiece. . . . I lifted the sound-proofed camera off its feet and set it in motion on pneumatic tires. Scenes moved out of one room and into others without halt. I tried to introduce what I call counterpoint of action and dialogue." (This idea will not be new to the readers of *Close Up*, however novel it may seem to readers of *The New York Times*.) "The camera flew, jerked, floated and rolled, discarding its stubborn tripod-legs for a set of wired wheels that raced over the studio floors.

"The camera here becomes descriptive in a new sort of way. Where a break in the ordinary film to allow for a close-up has been the *modus operandi*. I now guide my

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lens along a straight and continuous line, without breaks in continuity, without needless explanatory speeches and also sans the printed subtitle.

"As in music, I have tried to attain counterpoint in the film. Not alone in the action on the screen, but in sound. For example, when the mother bends over the child singing it to sleep . . . the camera leaves her for a moment and goes to the head of the child, who . . . whispers her prayer. . . Two unconnected sounds heard at the same time, that form a melodious whole.

"I have also tried to keep design in mind. There is always one force in motion played against another, and the camera rises and falls to catch the decorative element whether still or in motion.

"The camera then becomes an invisible spectator.

"By carefully timing the sequences and exercising stopwatch precision in rehearsing the cast, I believe I have a completed film that needs but a minimum of cutting."

Gilbert Seldes, our critic emeritus of the movie-as-art, writes in *Harper's* for September on "Talkies Progress":

"Not one of the talkies shown by midsummer, 1929, is worth a minute of any intelligent person's time. In themselves, that is. A number of them are good enough entertainment because they are transpositions to the screen of good stage melodrama or of good musical shows; some are good entertainment in the accidental moments when they remain movies. But as a self-contained, self-sufficient form they are wholly negligible and are worth consideration only because they are beginning to show signs of knowing what direction they want to take. Up to the present they have

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lived on borrowed material; and the trouble with living on the energies or emotions of others is that one doesn't live." The general sense of Mr. Seldes' epitome is accurate even if the analogy in the last sentence is amiss. If the sound film finds something that can be borrowed and incorporated that is its prerogative. Mr. Seldes objects to the early practice of focusing the camera on the throat or gullet of the speaker; he objects to it as unpleasant—why so finicky?—and because it doesn't permit us to see the voice's effect on the other characters. He says that now directors know they do not need to locate the voice by isolating the speaker. Seldes, like the logician that he is, says that in the nature of the instruments lay the answer to the problem—the stability of the microphone, the activity of the camera. But the microphone need not be immobile. The points upon the talkie which Mr. Seldes makes I have previously considered and presented in these pages. These points refer to the apparent non-synchronization, surmountable (though the writer does not say so) by the very camera-concentration to which he objects. As to the aesthetic necessities that "the art of cutting the new films has yet to be developed," and "a convention of speech must be effected." I must say that Mr. Seldes sounds like a weathercock. I have myself in *Close Up*, not merely expressed the needs for these instruments of the compound film, but have recorded tentative methods for the realization of the needs. And more await publication in these pages. It is true, Mr. Seldes says some theorists have expressed possible methods, but his summary is at this date a little behind times.

Simultaneous with this article of Mr. Seldes appears his

book on *The Movie and the Talkies*. It is of necessity a brief book, and one must acknowledge that the author has done a good job. Indeed, I know of no one else who could remember to say as much as he has contained in the volume.* It is a pocket critical-history of the American film, despite tangential references to films elsewhere. Mr. Seldes might have carried out the work even more effectively had he placed stresses (in the sense of length of passages) more judiciously. He begins: "The moving picture is an illusion. It is also an industry." He spends a number of pages on the evidences of the illusion, implying that the illusory nature of the cinema differentiates it basically from the other arts. But—is not painting an illusion? Is not literature an illusion? Is paint any more a reality than the static image? Is a picture formed of paint any more a reality than a motion made of static images? But beyond this is another question: the illusion that becomes the reality of art (the reality of imparted experience) is not the illusory physical basis of the medium, but the organization which we call performance.† Mr. Seldes has tried to concentrate into his slim volume the movie's technical foundations, its commercial history (which he might

* This little book is crowded with the various phases of the motion picture. At times Mr. Seldes is eloquent in his condensations, viz: "... the movies can annihilate space and show the aggressors, the victims and the rescuers; it can subdivide time and multiply suspense; it can give the maximum of threat and of fear and hold them to the last fraction of intensity before it gives the maximum of joy." This arises out of a reference to an early Griffith film.

† The confusion here is of the illusion of the origins with the illusion of the expression. The latter, while it relates to the former, is in a category, not isolated, but singular. That is, it does not depend solely nor—after being created—much upon its origins, it has its own peculiar

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have packed into a couple of lines—"It was born in the laboratory and reared in the counting-house."), and the aesthetic development and principles. There are films made strictly upon the physical basis of the film: the animated cartoon, etc., but these are not the most important of the cinematic forms. Montage is, in a rudimentary sense, this physical basis of the film. But to build up a syllogism leading to a law of cinematic aim upon the premise of the film's illusory nature is to make the mere material rudiments the complete aesthetic experience. This has been an American error among the aesthetes of the cinema. Mr. Seldes does not make, however, the full mistake of being literal as was Mr. Matthew Josephson. He recognizes the American blunder that saw action as motion. I have put it before in these words: Cinema movement is not simple recorded motion, it is organized motion (rhythm). Seldes is wise enough to observe that the American folk-film is rudimentary but not realized, and the reason for this is not the crass and stupid commercialism—which Seldes rightly indicates has proven its ignorance before the tribunal of actual developments, which has vindicated the aesthetician

experience to impart. Mr. Seldes, by his reasoning from the illusory basis of the cinema, concludes that the chief error has been the "over-emphasis of the actual side," that the cinema's "essential quality has been put aside in favor of an incidental." Still, the "actual"—the incidental, the factual—has been a source for the development of the essential: the newsreel and the romantic documentary, for instance; the newsreel and the Russian montage-film; the newsreel and *Potemkin*. The essential quality of any art subsists and survives against odds. These odds are the materials—obstacles if you will—to be mastered and converted. All art is victory and every artist, despite his beliefs, must be an optimist in so far as his art is concerned.

—but the congenital rudimentary and literal-mindedness of the American cinema, too expressive of the American non-creative mentality. It is because of this bred-in-the-bone-and-blood limitation that I urge a New York cinema. The Hollywood film-colony is a vested interest community of phlegmatic imaginations and a circle of imitations. When I think of the reader of Mr. Seldes' book, I accept Mr. Seldes' reiterations of erstwhile axioms which by now are platitudes. No one in America—or very few—read serious critiques of the cinema. People have had to be told that the movie is not a hybrid, despite reference to other arts. Still, Mr. Seldes might have stressed certain qualifications such as: while the movie is not a mobilized sculpture or painting, and while it was a confusion that considered the movie an "electrical theatre," the unawareness of other mediums is no guarantee of a unique motion picture art. This qualification should further stress that no longer do we need to think of a particular theme as cinematic or not, if there is the artist who can convert it into cinema. The entire experience of mankind belongs to the film as it belongs to every other art, and mankind's graphic experience (painting and sculpture) can inform the structure of the motion picture. I repeat myself to the readers of *Close Up*, because this statement of "sources" is most important in a land whose cinema is literal and matter-of-fact.

It is this literal mind which explains the fact that Mr. Seldes correctly states: there has been no development beyond Griffith in composition. Only the American comedy has got to any distance beyond rudiments. It is not Chaplin alone who extended the rudiments. Indeed, it can barely be

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said that Chaplin is the extension of the American movie. Though he derives somewhat from Mack Sennett and—Seldes forgets—Max Linder, he is more validly the extension of the English music-hall and, to an even greater extent, the development of himself. Much nearer to America in structure and temper are films like: *Hands Up!* with Raymond Griffith, and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, from the Mark Twain novel. Chaplin the personality is perfection, but he is not the sole realization of performance in the cinema. For the actor is not the achievement of the film—Mr. Seldes will agree to that, I know. If in America the film has not been fully realized it is only because the director has been unable to realize it, and this goes as much for Chaplin as director of his own comedies (yes, and of *A Woman of Paris*, too) as for Griffith and Sennett and the lesser men, including Mr. Seldes' favourite King Vidor.†

Seldes very soberly and with some courage meets the Russian film and is not rhapsodic over it. But he fails to name its cardinal fault: it is a perfection and elaboration of the American physical method, a thousand times superior

† Mr. Seldes wishes his text to culminate in two queries, the first of which is: Why has no figure comparable to Chaplin in slapstick comedy appeared in any of the other types of the movie? I have answered this query in my own way above but I wish to add, that if Mr. Seldes means: figures comparable in their *understanding* of the nature of film performance (and that should be the question, not degree of excellence), I offer Werner Krauss, Asta Nielsen and the maligned Catherine Hessling. If he means directionally, I submit the Victor Seastrom of Swedish Biograph, Eisenstein, Dreyer. Frankly the "cult of Charlie Chaplin" needs some investigation. As for Mr. Seldes' enthusiasm for Vidor, it is not so exacting as his judgment usually requires.

to the latter, but unsuited to a material more inferential, more social-minded, more profound than the usual American content. With all his urge to transcend the literal, Griffith was also held back by the experience of the American impact-film and as ultimate experience his films never attained to more than sententiousness and a "poesie" which was reflected in the false and tedious restraint of a Lillian Gish or a Mae Marsh, whom Mr. Seldes sentimentally remembers.

Mr. Seldes does not venture into a discussion of categories of the film which might lead him to consider forms out of the immediate range of the American experience. He does not treat at all of the future film, the psychically intensive, whose first and probably archetypal utterance is Dreyer's *Jeanne d'Arc*. He repeats the objection he has contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* to the close-up, confusing its banal and sentimental effect-use in the American film with its intrinsic offering as a rhythmic employment or bold imagery for intensiveness (where it ceases being a close-up). He will not talk of the stereoscopic film—because he has not seen one—save to condemn it as false realism. Of course, it need not be that any more than sound is only extraneous duplication, simply because the practitioners have no minds beyond the literal. §

§ He blunders somewhat rankly in referring to rhetorical uses of instrument as "tricks." And a correction: *Entr'acte* is usually accredited to René Clair and not to Man Ray, as Seldes assigns it; and the film of Chomette's was sponsored, not made by de Beaumont. A last tribute: *Close-Up* is referred to twice in the little book (which by the way costs \$1.00), once as "fascinating." Dorothy M. Richardson is quoted.

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The New York movie has individual articulation in the work of a few independent artists. The first of these whose film I have seen are Watson and Webber. They have made a short cinematization of Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*. It is done under the impetus of the French school of the multiple-image, with prismatic multiplication of an image, gelatinous construction, limpid movements, sustained fluid rhythms. The technique of it is quite professional, but the effect is broken by two intrusions: first the amateurishness of the players (fantastic stylization is the severest test of the player) and the presence of solid forms in a contained structure of gelatinous, obscure, impersonalized, sheer, non-solid forms. Solidity defeats the mood and the visual apprehension of the digits in the film's collective symbolism. This is a film too brief and too intense to permit of a dual structure. The characters should never appear as human entities in a world of solid affairs, such as food. There is no quotidianal reality in the transparency of this Usher-world as Watson and Webber establish it and the establishment of such a non-human world denies (particularly since the unit is so brief) anything beyond it that can be seen with morning-eyes through no intermediate eye of gelatine and collapse.

The film is creditable, but we must not exaggerate its achievement. It is important as a capable independent effort, and as an indication of an interest in the non-literal in America. But how important will such enterprise be to the realization of a new American movie? To me the new cinema will build with the healthy rudiments of the film we

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have so far effected. We have our mythology, our legend, our lore, our folk-film. That is our *source*.

I suppose the question will be asked: how does this film compare with Epstein's Usher-film? I say first: there is no similarity. Then I say: Epstein's is more profound, it achieved a complete and precise sense of universe-torment. The American film remains with me as an excellent achievement in physical materials. It does not impress as a psychical experience. I feel no transcendence in the use of the physical materials. The enthusiasm for it—and it deserves disinterested praise—is due to the weariness among appreciative sensibilities of the world of the American film which will not venture in the sheer nor in the more delicate utilization of the film's instruments.

One critic has preferred the American Usher-film to the French and has dismissed the latter as using age-old (as age goes in cinema history) devices like rising mists. And why not, pray? Devices like words are determined by their affiliations in a definite unity. The mists are integral in the Epstein film and they allow his penetrating camera the scrutiny his film demands. A new device does not make a new film; an old device does not make a film out-of-date or trite.

* * *

The readers of *Close Up* will recall my words on the olfactory cinema. I discover in the September 3rd, 1917 *Artcraft Advance*, issued by the Artcraft Pictures, a division of the Paramount at that time, these words by Douglas Fairbanks: "There is now on foot a scheme to suggest sentiment or emotions by odours and perfumes." There is

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an odour for every emotion if it can only be discovered. A certain Italian is now working on a symphony of odours. You know how you associate an odour with some place. Heliotrope for instance has a wonderful effect on me. Should a symphony of odours be scientifically developed we may get as much from it as from sight. They will be able, in conjunction with what you see on the screen, to shoot out an odour into the auditorium which will produce the same effect as sad music such as Beethoven used to play. Belasco tried it when he used incense in the *Darling of the Gods*."

Mr. Ralph Steiner is a New York artist of photography. He has made a film, *H2O*, which has won the Photoplay amateur prize. I have not yet seen the film but I hasten to record this victory which may be significant of further independent films. Or may not. Still, that an American may be willing to film such an untypical (from our fans' standpoint) subject, one so pictorial, as water, is no small evidence of a new attitude. Or is it an old attitude? Is this the influence of Paris upon a mind essentially graphic in its interest? Therefore, the Paris influence—traditional in American, and the world's graphic art. But, you say and I agree, hadn't I better wait until I see the film? I assure you, my friends, I bear it no prejudice. Only—I am remembering Philippe Soupalt's good advice of some six years ago, that the American film must not go aground the "antiquated novelties." It has its own character to consummate.

HARRY A. POTAMKIN.

DENTAL DILEMMA

I have come back from the Chair again; from the Dental Chair sublime. From the forceps' way, and the gimlets' way; with cocaine at a guinea a time.

Gaps; and the toothache's ended. It may have been mere apprehension that did it. ("I am not going to hurt you; much.") Or it may have been the fact that I had just been initiated into Big Business and had lunched with a film magnate. Will gossip writers please note? The lunch in itself was an unqualified success. The talkies were here for good. Soon we should have colour. And the Grandeur Screen. The Big Man's company had the greatest line-up of stars and directors ever assembled in a motion picture studio.

Everything was for the worst in the worst of all possible worlds.

Later, after reading stale magazines in the Waiting Room I was in the Spirit. The inside dope on Hollywood, spilt by the Big Man in direct ratio to the number of oysters which he swallowed with a noise like the last pint of bath water running out, formed symphonies of headlines in the old grey cells, ran along the live wires of a number of vicious molars, and formed themselves finally into a large pair of forceps which

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were photographed in three dimensions, four natural colours and five crazy camera angles.

While in the Spirit, I dreamt, not unnaturally, that I dwelt in marble halls. Sitting back comfortably in what at first seemed to be a Sedan chair, but which afterwards associated itself more definitely with the lethal chamber, I was transported through the several realms of bliss, finally reaching an immense hall, in which were seated hundreds of prominent picture personalities, all looking more dignified, more pious, than they usually look on earth.

Not quite aware how I got there, I found myself at the same desk as Cecil B. De Mille, who was studiously reading Pudovkin in the original. Nearby was Frank Borzage, pretending to study a ponderous book while really reading a novelette secreted under the ledge of the desk.

A studious class room. The British directors, in particular, were diligently applying themselves to the task of learning something about cinema. I noticed that despite the general air of philosophic deliberation the class had its naughty boys. Rex Ingram was studying a photograph of himself in a fan magazine, and Lionel Barrymore was glancing through his collection of Press cuttings.

Perhaps the most significant thing about the assembled immortals, however, was their extreme innocence. Man Ray, devoid of his earthly bulk, was leaning spirit-like over a collection of geometric objects, continually experimenting with their positions, something like a youngster being initiated into the mysteries of building blocks.

The general hubbub of the Spirits, which emanated chiefly from the German quarter, where E. A. Dupont and Richard

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Eichburg were arguing as to whether or not *Piccadilly* was real cinema, subsided as a white-clad figure wearing horn-rimmed glasses took up his position on the lecturing platform.

In readiness for the intellectual struggle awaiting them gum was slipped into spirit-mouths, mouths which knew not the acquaintance of forceps. Speaking with a voice remarkably like Western Electric sound-on-film, the oracle commenced to deliver his address. His tonsil tantrums stabbed the air, for all the world like a hypodermic syringe on an aching gum.

"At this point in the stream of causation, children," he began, for there was obviously no morning or afternoon in this lecture-hall, "I want you to consider the fundamentals of cinema. Later, we will come to their application, but before we can do that we must have a clear idea of the medium with the use of which we have been graciously entrusted."

F. W. Murnau shuffled, a faint, spirit-shuffle.

"Now, children," continued the tonsils, "who can tell me what cinema is?"

A thousand spirit minds were working furiously. Halos of inspiration appeared and disappeared around the ghostly heads.

"Please, Teacher," cried Carl Laemmle, Jr., suddenly, "I know. Box-office."

A distant roar, which might have been either the Last Trump or a Heavenly traffic-block, sounded in the hall.

"The cinema," continued the oracle, warming into his stride, and taking occasional sips of luke-warm nectar from a glass at his elbow, "is the oldest of the arts. It is so old,

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so mixed up with the primitive attempts at expression on the part of pre-D. W. Griffith man, that people naturally assume it is a new art. You will find, children, that people, particularly critics, have an unfortunate habit of looking at everything upside down. That explains the success of *Ben Hur*."

"Now for a definition of cinema. . . ." The oracle paused. All oracles avoid definitions. "Well, that is to say, well. . . . Cinema may briefly be defined as a synthesis of light, shade, and movement, a construction postulating these three entities." The lecturer took a long gulp of nectar and looked pleased that he had passed the first hurdle. "That definition, children, may mean something; I leave it to you to find out. Write to the papers about it. They should know."

"Having successfully decided upon our definition, children, we have to consider the relationship each part bears to the other, and in turn, to the whole. And what part the whole bears to each other. And to the other part of the whole. After which we may dwell lightly on the relationship of the other part of the whole to the remaining part of the part of the whole."

"I take it that was quite clear? Let me repeat. . . . Did you fully understand that, King Vidor? Hitchcock, stop looking at those marble pillars as though you want to run a camera all the way up them. It isn't done in the best circles."

"Now, the synthesis of a picture, the building up of its sequence, the visual relationship of its separate shots, the calculated tonal and structural relationships of its individual

compositions, and the relationship of those qualities with the film as a whole, is called *montage*.

"*Montage* is the *bête noir* of the commercial cinema. For the translation of that passage see the glossary at the end of any popular dictionary. The actual word "*montage*" is of French origin, meaning, literally, mounting. According to the number of pages any English journalist may fill in describing the meaning of the word, so he is considered to be mounting the intellectual ladder which leads ultimately to irate news editors, low-brow letters about high-brow critics, and the dole. You follow me? "

The Sage's discourse was suspended for awhile in order to permit the feebly protesting ejection of a number of American film magnates, who indignantly declared that they had never heard of the word.

"Once upon a time there were a number of sensational pictures made in Russia. They altered the face of the film world, they shattered the fair idol known as Ufa. And earnest people following in their wake mistook their means as their end. *Montage*, with apologies to the British studios, occupied the thoughts of the film-makers.

"But the result, unfortunately, was generally unhappy. There arose a circle of enthusiasts who mistook *montage* for its spectacular constituent, quick cutting. There arose a school, whose coat of arms was a pair of scissors, snipping. More celluloid was wasted through Russian imitators endeavouring to be clever than was ever wasted in Hollywood.

"At a meeting of a certain film group, for example, a young man who should have known better, presented a

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picture, which shall be nameless, and introduced it to the audience with the remark that he added the *montage* after making the picture. He seriously thought snip-snap cutting and reverse printing gave him *montage*.

"More than that, he mentioned casually that the printers had accidentally reversed the negative in the wrong place, but added that he did not think it affected the balance of the picture.

"He was right, children. It didn't."

Some consternation was caused at this juncture by an alarming clanking noise, not unlike the clatter of surgical instruments on enamel trays. It transpired, however, to be nothing more sinister than the arrival of Lon Chaney, disguised as a money-box. He was thereupon surrounded by a number of half-starved British producers.

"Having decided upon the things that make FORM in a picture," drawled the Voice, hissing slightly like a disc system in full blast, "we have to consider subject matter. Here opinions differ. The commercial cinema and the *avant garde*—the latter being a curious collection of unwashed animals who live in Chelsea, and the outskirts of all big cities—can never agree."

"Hollywood and Elstree, the places where they make motion pictures, employ people who write what are known as film stories. That means to say, they take the one eternal story of the movies and twist it into a form they fondly think is new."

"The eternal story is simply this; the Farmer's daughter loves the Milkman, but the dirty Squire has a Mortgage on the old farm. He demands the hand—well, perhaps not

exactly the *hand*—of the daughter in return for the deed. Father, a weak fellow, who has never recovered from the shame his Daughter's Mother brought on the Family, gives in. But the Milkman turns up at the critical moment, waving a £10,000 cheque won in an illegal Football Competition. The Squire dies of drink and his bones turn into particularly nasty maggots. The loving pair live on, and thoughtlessly reproduce their species *ad infinitum*."

"That, children, is the one and only commercial film story. It contains all the ingredients of Box Office, and has been moulded a thousand thousand times in the furnace. It has everything; Father-love, Mother-love, romance, comedy—and how!—pathos, and S.A. (South Africa, children, South Africa)."

"Now, for those of you who have been nurtured in Hollywood I have a somewhat painful surprise. Understand," (here I was vaguely aware that I was sitting back stiffly and yawning inelegantly) "I am not going to hurt you; much."

"The Ideal film story is not literary-representational in the conventional sense. The crazy idea that a film is only a film by reason of its plot and counter-plot is as out of date as the dental surgery of the 'one hand on the tongs and one foot in the patient's chest' school."

"If you analyse the great pictures of the world you will find they contain no plot, little incident, and only a threadbare sequence of events. Even in the commercial cinema this dictum holds true. Witness the box-office success of *The Cock-Eyed World*, a film with no story, but an alleged theme."

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Mr. Raoul Walsh here rose and repeated the most famous oral gag from his picture. He was promptly offered a plate of fruit by an attendant dressed as a United States Marine.

"The film with little literary value enjoys great advantages over its more rigid rival. It has a cinematic freedom denied in the narration of a conventional plot. But such films do not succeed."

Mr. Stuart Davis here cried "Shame!"

"They do not succeed because they baffle their audience, and audiences—particularly the British Audience—hate being baffled. When people for the first time meet something which they can't understand, but think they should be able to understand, they get angry. Their sense of defeat vents itself on the work which has defeated them. Give an old lady a copy of Joyce's *Ulysses* and see what she says. Particularly if she happens to open it at the last page."

"It does not do to anger the box-office, nor does it do to infuriate the critics. Nobody really reads the critics except the people whose names are mentioned favourably in the criticism, but there is a popular opinion that they are demons to be feared."

"This matter of story-less picture making is much more important than it appears at first sight. I shall make it the subject for the next Earth-lesson, which I expect you to film very carefully on nice, clean negative. And anyone not doing his Earth-lesson will have to bring a note from his executive saying why he hasn't done it."

Gravitational forces were pulling; zig-zag. Twisting downwards, just like a tooth coming out.

"That, children, will be all for to-day. Mr. Pudovkin,

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you shouldn't put your books away like that, so soon. You may be head of the class, but it's very bad manners. Remember what the English Press said about you when you visited London. You may have a reputation to live up to in that direction, but don't indulge in it here."

There was a sharp downward tug, and the Celestial Film School grew dim.

Glancing round hurriedly before the Spirit entirely left me I caught a glimpse of Cecil B. De Mille, and heard him telling William Fox that this *montage* business was the bunk, anyway, and that he personally believed in bedroom scenes.

A white-clad figure, wearing horn-rimmed spectacles, was chattering away amiably.

"This new injection is remarkable stuff," he was saying. "So soothing to the nerves."

HUGH CASTLE.

L'ESPRIT MOYEN ET LE CINEMA

Levrant, en parlant de Molière, disait déjà : En effet, les applaudissements des délicats ne suffisaient point à l'auteur, il lui fallait aussi les pièces blanches du parterre pour faire vivre sa troupe de comédiens.

Primum Vivere deinde philosophari, et pour vivre, le cinéma organisé commercialement doit atteindre avant tout

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l'esprit moyen. On ne saurait donc trouver à redire aux tendances banales des scénarios, à l'usage fréquent d'expressions populaires.

Peu à peu, cependant, attirés par ce qui, dans quelques films, trahissait un talent incomplètement standardisé, séduits par certains effets esthétiques, voulus ou non, les esprits cultivés, de toutes classes, vinrent au cinéma. Ces adeptes nouveaux, au même titre que le "tout-venant" ont droit certes à quelques égards; il serait bon que, de temps à autre, surgisse une bande à leur portée, qui fortifie leur foi naissante. Pour mieux satisfaire leurs goûts, ces amateurs de substance cinégraphique se groupent ici et là en petits clubs privés. La création de ces associations n'est pas toujours commentée en termes agréables, car le commun aime à blâmer qui s'écarte de lui pour faire bande à part. On accuse ces cinéphiles de faire parade de sentiments élevés, mais après un triage préalable des snobs et des oisifs, les Ciné-clubs se trouveraient encore composés d'excellentes natures qui ont cent fois raison de vouloir bien faire confiance au cinéma, au vu de promesses latentes. Ce n'est pas à dire, vraiment, que les spectacles ordinaires ne révèlent jamais de films réellement intéressants, et, sous ce rapport, l'on constate certainement une amélioration sensible de la qualité des films projetés habituellement. Il ne faudrait pas non plus s'imaginer que toutes les bandes présentées en séances privées soient des chefs-d'oeuvre d'inspiration artistique... loin de là. Dans ce domaine, comme dans les autres, s'immiscent aux produits de la meilleure imagination ceux dont certains esprits plus ambitieux d'étonner, d'ahurir le bourgeois que d'exprimer avec sincérité, accouchent sans

effort. Et s'il est nécessaire de se garder des films creux ou infiniment soporifiques, il n'est pas moins indispensable de condamner les élucubrations de ceux qui, par le moyen des pellicules, donnent libre cours à un lyrisme du plus douteux acabit.

J'en arrive au cinéma pur, ainsi dénommé parce qu'il exclût l'idée continue et se borne à éveiller des sensations visuelles. Si ces sensations étaient elles-mêmes génératrices d'idées, le cinéma pur serait, à n'en pas douter, la chose par excellence de l'amateur cinéophile. Mais prenons *La Coquille et le Clergyman*, *La Marche des Machines*, *La Nuit Electrique*, *Symphonie D'une Grande Ville*, *Etoile de Mer*. Que constatons-nous? Le premier est un salmagondis de visions originales, certes, mais ne renferme aucun motif dont, non seulement l'esprit, mais l'œil, puisse raisonnablement se satisfaire. Le produit d'une imagination personnelle, c'est vrai, mais où le naturel de l'impression fait place à une recherche d'expressions curieuses et inédites dont l'auteur seul apprécie l'objet. Il n'est pas douteux qu'une lente investigation des signes visuels ne puisse aboutir à une forme idéale de la représentation figurée de la vie, et, à cet égard, Madame Germaine Dulac ne saurait être blâmée de vouloir libérer l'image du scénario conventionnel pour ne la faire servir qu'à suggérer intuitivement le sens de tels mouvements, tels groupements de formes. Mais le caractère abstrait de semblables procédés, s'il prête volontiers une physionomie et des possibilités nouvelles au film, ne se peut guère imposer tout au long d'un spectacle. Quand Ozep ou Preobrashenskaja, pour illustrer mieux la pensée, ont recours aux parallèles, aux symboles, l'on saisit instantanément que

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les "recettes" cinégraphiques, non plus constamment exploitées comme dans *Jeanne d'Arc*, de Dreyer, par exemple, mais savamment mises à profit, concourent puissamment à l'harmonie et à la signification plus profonde de l'action filmée. Les travaux d'avant-garde ne sont fréquemment que d'arides concentrations de moyens et d'intentions personnels dont il serait aisé, sans contredit, d'extraire de précieuses indications, mais qui, pour les besoins de l'attention, ne possèdent ni la variété, ni l'homogénéité nécessaires.

Deslaw, lui, enregistre la course des bielles, le va-et-vient des pistons, impressionne l'émulsion de ses films des lueurs nocturnes des boulevards. Ce n'est là que l'A.B.C. du métier, les rudiments de l'expression cinégraphique, mais il n'est pas sans intérêt de commencer par là; tant d'autres, délaissant le langage des choses, s'en vont accumulant les productions sans relief, persuadés qu'à eux seuls le sourire de Dolly et l'uniforme d'Ivan suffiront à produire le charme d'une narration pressée d'en finir.

La Symphonie D'une Grande Ville serait une chose excellente si l'on en supprimait le tiers et par là je veux dire les multiples visions qui n'apportent aucun élément frais de curiosité visuelle. Et *l'Etoile de Mer*, quoi qu'on en dise, piétine sur place.

Poète ou philosophe, peintre ou analyste, le cinéma, sous ces quatre aspects, se doit avant tout de n'exprimer, au moyen des images, que des idées, des sentiments personnels. Il se doit surtout d'éviter la banalité et de ne s'emparer des êtres sensibles qu'en poursuivant, à travers la

forme, la sincérité d'émotion. Cette sincérité là est proprement artistique. Nous ne pouvons attendre du cinéma aucune révélation qui ne soit la manifestation d'une personnalité, d'un caractère, et moins encore devons-nous espérer de la production dite internationale. Béranger aimait déjà qu'un Russe soit Russe et un Anglais, Anglais. Nous irons plus loin, en disant qu'il est nécessaire que ce Russe, cet Anglais là, s'abstiennent de tourner la manivelle s'ils n'ont rien à dire. Il est grand temps, n'est-ce pas, qu'à la teinte neutre du film commercial se substituent les colorations propres à chaque individu, nation, race. L'esprit moyen du cinéma, passe-partout commercial, que le sonore aurait pu condamner, gagne encore du terrain grâce à cette invention. Nous aurons le film polyglotte qui s'en ira vulgarisant d'un pôle à l'autre un synchronisme franco-américain ou germano-russe, nous aurons . . . mais au fait pourquoi prophétiser.

FREDDY CHEVALLEY.

COMMENT AND REVIEW

ADVANCED PICTURES ON VIEW.

One cannot help talking about the Shaftesbury Avenue Pavilion, because it is the one silent house. Mr. Stuart Davis is always on the look-out for something new.

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Londoners will be able to see *The Lamp-posts of Paris*, and *The Colour Symphony*.

Certain elements, in commercial scenarios, repeat like onions. There is, at present, a tendency to make "theme songs in plastic light": short pictures, based on simple stories, which are much in favour because Anthony Asquith, or Widgey Newman, said that only the treatment of a film matters.

I hate artificial cinema respiration; I hate waxworks, things which look alive and are not. Ugh!

A little actress, Mireille de Severin, plays four leading rôles in *The Lamp-posts*. Her face has something of the Mabel Poulton in it. She is a school girl who refuses to buy flowers from herself as a starving outcast. In turn she becomes the "woman of luxury", by blacking her eyelids and wearing artificial pearls, who furiously chases away herself as the flower girl, who, finally, manages to sell a single bouquet to herself as a young, love-struck seamstress.

Such a complicated day, as one can well imagine, is too exhausting for the poor thing.

Children skip with a rope tied to a lamp-post. Feet, of the flower girl, tread the cobblestones of the night-deserted streets. The neglected rope swinging on the lamp-post. An orientation of the camera to give the view point of Mr. Moon. Feet dangling lifelessly, shadow on the wall, flowers washed down the gutter....

It is a theme song in light, the kind of thing Al Jolson sings in the weepies, but it is presented seriously with the question, "Is it cinema?" always in the mind of the director. Mr. Potamkin could tell them about unity: theme

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and treatment must correspond. It is no use for the director to be smart aleck when the story demands a man of deep insight.

Lamp-posts are supposed to link together the episodes, for the somewhat childish reason that most of them take place under a street light. When a character walks down a street the film switches to the heads of lamp-posts, framed in an iris, whizzing by very smoothly. Had the scenario been conceived in a more poetical way the director might have shown us faces like moon-lit flowers, types, moods, the sea on land: something too big for the stage as we know it.

If walls could speak! The camera can make them, can make lamp-posts tell of life, instead of singing four verses of a sentimental ditty.

It is worth seeing. In due course, when it is presented, I advise readers to look out for it, if only for the glimpses of old Montmartre, and for the promise it gives that, one day, someone will tell the story which was hinted at by the lamp lighter in Jannings' *The Last Laugh*.

The Colour Symphony is another film of promise. The camera is more limited than we think, and capable of greater things than we dream. It cannot make a sugar story convincing, but it could have developed the secondary *motif* into something impressive.

We have had visual rhyme (severely copyrighted), sound imagery, counterpoint, and Kino Eye-wash; isn't it time we had colour innuendo? As a cult it needs prophets, severely to copyright it, as well as a few smiles of encouragement from our advanced amateurs, or, better still, a code of film renter's grips and Wardour Street passwords.

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The Colour Symphony puts all sorts of notions into one's head: what the avant-garde can do with colour, what ought not to be done with colour, and what everyone is trying to do with colour. If the literati do not approve of this little film, when it is shown, I shall still keep my notions—possibly keep them dark!

For years theatrical colours have tempted many to play with the idea of a film on the lines of this American effort. The coloured sheets of gelatine, which the stage electrician slips in front of the spot lights, create a whole world of the artificial. Pure photography, as Francis Bruguière always said, is a matter of controlled light. The photographic artist of to-day should be able to boast that his pictures are his own, not a record of nature's own. Thus these theatrical colours offer a chance to the cinematographer in particular, to make something beyond the imitative. A world can be suggested: from the surge of an angry mob to the collapse of a child's gaudy toy.

Colour photography is sound photography. Colour music. Everyone has heard of colour music, everyone has heard colour. The scale of the musician parallels the colours of the spectrum: some notes are ivory white, others flame ruby.

In the experiment, under review, there is a flow of kaleidoscopic patterns. There is no cutting; in its place a constant merging, melting, and splitting of figures. Prisms are employed, the patterns being symmetrical. The centre is displaced, now to one side, now to another. A circular basis can be found for all the compositions, even the expanding stars seem to be formed from the overlapping of four circles. Occasionally there is a sense of depth, while

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some of the groups have a whirlwind force, seeming to be sucked into the central web. Towards the end of the picture a shape, resembling a lighthouse in silhouette, makes its appearance, and, in a strange way, radiates brilliantly tinted curves.

What is so surprising, and important, is the dramatic power of juxtaposed colours. A red that suddenly explodes, a soft green infusing the screen after a wash of scarlet, black stars that unfold from a sea of gold : all react on the spectator in a definite, psychological manner. An audience can be thrilled, soothed, startled, by a transient colour glimpse. A chain of emotions could be inspired by points of luminous shades, growing, converging, sinking back. So that an author-artist could build up a situation from a crescendo of light, colour and form.

There are clearly marked limits to the things which can be done. In *The Colour Symphony* there are moments when one is reminded of an animated drawing-room carpet, or a wishy-washy imitation of *Vogue*. Severe eye-strain is caused by the intense demands of following the figures of mauve, vermilion, sapphire, lavender, all at the same time.

The field is a new one. Who will be in the vanguard with colour innuendo?

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

CLOSE UP

SA TÊTE.

NEW FILM BY JEAN EPSTEIN.

Mr. Epstein's trees planted along a low horizon. A farmyard. Mr. Epstein has been looking at the stills of the *Ballade of a Duck*. The old mother does not know what is happening. The spectator does not know what is happening. A church, as if to say, "Don't worry."

The hero, with his young lady, having his fortune told. Told by Mr. Epstein and not the fakir. Suggestion of a guillotine, of a love affair. Frances Dhélia at the fair, holding down her skirts. Even if the camera does not know what is happening the public must be occupied. Attraction. The hero thinks of his girl's employer, rich employer at the bank.

Telepathy: rather nice. The boy thinks of the old man, who is shown going to his house. He reaches a decision as the old man reaches the house.

The girl gives him money to pay for the swings and the roundabouts.

The boy is arrested. The mother does not know why. A cocoon of a film. One sees something; next day one sees paper about the affair. So the mother tries to read the paper, waiting for the trial. For the first time she reads in the paper that her son is accused of murder of the wealthy banker. Plastic interest in the inserts of the paper; different sizes of shots and movement. Epstein compositions of small figures on the bench. One begins to know what is happening, one begins to know Mr. Epstein.

Magnesium ribbon; photograph of mother. The press

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knows what it wants, a good murder story. Mr. Epstein is doing his best. The rhythm is more assured.

Now that the spectator knows what is happening he begins to impose himself on the film, to form a false idea. The chauffeur who saw the boy entering the bank; the brother who saw the boy near the director's room; the timid boy.

It all would be more effective with sound, which, at the moment, is dangerous, and there is a peculiar evolution of film technique depending on film technique. Large close ups jump to long shots in such a way that one feels Mr. Epstein is thinking of the position of a trolley at the end of a travelling shot. This makes smooth cuts for the audience fed on America's moving cameras, but it is a tiresome subterfuge for the critic.

The mother makes friends with the girl. Compare the mothers making friends in *Finis Terrae*. They turn as the door of the court-room opens; things are not going well with the boy.

The Church. Villagers do not understand. They throw stones at the mother's cottage.

Cigarettes; boredom of slick brother who knows too much.

The characters begin to bore the spectator, who knows this much too much, that the boy will get off in the end and go away with the girl. He begins to tell himself stories about them. The mother, in her bonnet, makes him hum the refrain, "Don't have any more, Mrs. More."

A cruel touch at the end; the village rejecting the mother.

Pudovkin would find all the moral lessons that Russian films (please note, film critics) DEMAND.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

CLOSE UP

PEHOUA.

A NEW NEGRO DOCUMENT.

Natives climbing onto a white boat: white men climbing onto the black land. Why will they insist on the whites? Are we not tired of them? More than whites, a white story. The new agent who is astonished at the civilisation of the natives. I hope the negro people get some fun out of the primitiveness of the whites.

When is a document not a document? When it is a French one. The natives are shown at their tasks, and the silly little agent trots into the picture to watch them. I feel as annoyed as if my neighbour stuck his head, every few minutes, into the beam of the projection apparatus.

There are some pretty magic rites, there are some lovely heavy skies, some good dances. What does our hero do when he gets to the native village? Does he try to vibrate with the rites, skies, dances? He puts on a phonograph, he reads an inane French comic paper.

The comedy with the little boys is either very charming or very forced, it depends on the time of day, before or after a good lunch.

Our hero wants a servant. He is married to a black girl. Her black lover hopes to win her back. He becomes the victim at the Feast of Flagellation, exposing himself to the terrific blows. This is really exciting; a record of a true ceremony carried out perfectly seriously. The actor was beaten thoroughly for the sake of the avant-garde cinemas. Interest is spoilt by shots of the white man watching.

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The white man leaves, in a native propelled chair. After fetiches, trials by poison, the black girl is married again to the black man. While her marriage drums beat she . . . cries. Not even for purity, but for a white man's film (if any one still remembers Michael Arlen).

O. B.

FOYLE FOR FILMS.

A man played a gramophone. Stopped playing. Went behind the scenes to project *The Magic of Books*.

Pastoral books bring to you the magic of the country-side. Books superimposed over meadows. Tales of the sea bring to you adventure. Books superimposed over ships. Then, all in one title, a reminder that there are essays, memoirs, panegyrics, sermons, dramas, comedies, text-books, etcetera. A super superimposed effect? Cleverly looped by a view of book shelves.

Sir Walter Scott talks to Dickens in Epping Forest. (Somebody declares that Shelley is Harpo Marx). The literati of yesterday decide to journey to the new building of Messrs. Foyle, in Manette Street, and congratulate the proprietors.

This is one of the most determined efforts to use films for advertising. There are two doses of continuous projection, in Foyle's private theatre, each day. The pity is that they use an advertising film.

O. B.

CLOSE UP

POE AS AN INSPIRATION FOR THE CINEMA.

Epstein began *Usher* in an almost conventional manner: villagers gossiping in the inn, and the stranger who wants to go to Usher. The villagers refuse, to a man, to act as guide. Usher, in the world, but on the fringe of it. Not an impossible, but a different castle.

The much vaunted amateur production of *The Fall of the House of Usher* opens with overlapping shutters being withdrawn to show the tiny figures under cardboard pillars.

The lady is dressed, in the American version, as a typical vamp. She is very rude about her food: makes faces at it.

Optical trickery, with prisms, is not psychic atmosphere, especially when the composition is sloppy.

O. B.

FROZEN ULRIC.

Frozen Justice. Lenore Ulric in her first talkie. The vamp of Broadway. Theme song: Broadway, Broadway... We went.

Dog packs pulling sleighs, and men pushing the sleighs and dogs. It's a hard life in the North. Men are men, and Lenore Ulric is the star. She waits for the Great Chief, her husband, in a lace shawl. Frozen North. "What," she cries, "is the use of being beautiful if there is no man to see?" The audience is watching.

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Model of a ship collapses to rhythmic wind machines. Escape, with the captain, to a town of low bars. Dance, dance little lady. And she wants to go back to the Great Chief: works herself into such a passion that she forgets she is playing in a film and pulls too fiercely at a property drawer. Her efforts to steady the furniture, without spoiling the take, are as funny as the lady having difficulty with her music at the Russian pierrots.

Husband asks the camera if he will ever again find his wife? We'll see the producer about it.

Chase over the ice. Two characters point out how dangerous it is. Two characters point out how the ice broke in 1884 on such a day. Two characters make it all nice and easy for the popular patrons.

Back in the town Louis Wolheim's clothes are soaked in blood. The good-hearted prostitute dashes into the room, and asks him if he is hurt.

Sound is used very cleverly in the playing of a phonograph. Deliberate distortion, the patent of Mr. Pudovkin, is hinted at.

O. B.

THE GLITTERING SWORD.

This is—I am told—Mr. Ronald Gow's fifth film effort with the Altrincham School boys. A week was spent among them constructing and painting the sets, and a further three weeks in the actual shooting of the scenes on the locale of

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a single hill just outside Dartmouth. Wigs and thirty of the costumes were hired, the remaining 150 or so having been made by the boys' relatives.

All this means nothing, of course, unless a film is the outcome. Well, to use Mr. Gow's own words, *The Glittering Sword* is neither a box-office nor an *avant garde* proposition. But it would be interesting to school audiences and amateur production societies, and worthy of a word in *Close Up*.

In the form of an allegorical legend, the film is a call to youth in the future to decide for themselves upon either War and World Power or Peace, Bread and Life. But neither the allegory nor the significance of the various symbols come out with sufficient clarity and strength. The gamble for souls between Death and the Devil, should have been nearer the beginning of the film. It would have made an arresting opening scene.

Youth finds the silver sword, but when the stupid populace choose that it shall bring them Power through War, youth casts it into the sea. This scene might, with advantage to its conviction, have symbolised the future casting out superstition and aged tradition, and choosing reason and wisdom to guide its own strong right arm.

Mr. Gow should make his puppets move with a greater sense of rhythm, especially as he has to make up for the natural inability of schoolboys to develop any degree of characterisation.

HAY CHOWL.

BOOK REVIEWS.

Filmgegner von Heute, Filmfreunde von Morgen, by Hans Richter, published by H. Reckendorf, Berlin, S.W.48, Hedemannstrasse 48. Price, 7 RM. 50 Pf.

This book is particularly valuable on account of its fine illustrations. Richter's text is well considered but short, and it is admirably supplemented by a great variety of photographs chosen from films that have brought new ideas to the cinema.

Richter sees the salvation of the cinema through collective work and the creation of a group system. Although the workers from director to assistant camera-man have not equally important work, at least they should share the responsibility in part of its creation.

These questions are illustrated by stills from the best of the advanced films, and there is much satisfaction to be derived from an examination of the pictures.

The question of sound films is treated and Richter tries to show that the sound film does not need to repeat the faults of the silent cinema, but that it should free itself as rapidly as possible from the danger of assimilation. The sound film must establish its own laws, perhaps not yet even visualised, and must use to the full its own methods. Will the commercial world understand this point?

The English translation of the title is *Film Opponents of To-day, Film Friends of To-morrow*.

J. LENAUER.

CLOSE UP

RED LETTER DAY.

Three new German books : sensation for the London cinéophile.

Film Photos Wie Noch Nie is a most friendly book. There is not a page, of the copious illustrations, which assaults the eye. The patchwork grouping is just made for slow gloating. One can find so many old friends : Yvette, Emak Bakia, *Expiation*, and films with the Nielsen, with the Bergner, with *THE Porten*. The book approaches in form to the film, rather than to the conventional film book.

Some of the pages are made up with a star's best rôles, other pages have *Passion*, *Grace*, or *The Happy End* as title if not justification. Anna May Wong found her way onto the *Grace* page!

Hans Richter's *Filmgegner von Heute, Filmfreunde von Morgen* is a serious work, with a message : a message to cinemagoers to squeal for better films. Richter begins his work by showing that film is taken on emulsion coated celluloid. By excerpts he shows how motion can be speeded up, retarded, reversed, burlesqued. He shows the soft focus and the out of focus, distortion, different ways of moving the camera, and so forth. To those who are still groping it is essential. The *montage*, and cross cutting is explained by morsels of film. There is an explicit diagram revealing how the expression, of a young man, appears to change as he is juxtaposed to a plate, a dead man, and a nude woman. Detail, rhythm, and motion are all demonstrated in the

CLOSE UP

montage way. There are sections devoted to: actualities and educational pictures, visual metaphors, visual wit, Hans Richter, film poetry, and what has been achieved in the past.

Werner Gräff, in *Es Kommt der Neue Fotograf*, wants to get still photographic apparatus modified to suit modern requirements. He takes the old laws and proves them worthless. You must not light the hands of a sitter more strongly than the face, you must not have a line parallel to the border of a print, you must not have the horizon in the middle of the picture, you must not have a barren foreground, meeting points of thirds are the strong positions, the head of a model must be in the middle of the picture, the photographer must not cast his own shadow. . . All must-nots, to Werner Gräff, are equally absurd. Attention is paid to possibilities of lighting-out a nose, of taking pictures with beams of light shining into the lens, of magnifying small sections of an object to bring out the texture of the whole. Above everything the shape of the print, and the width of the white border, is proved to be a vital consideration: a subject which is completely neglected in England.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

Beyond This Point, by Sieveking and Bruguiere,
Duckworth. 15s.

One of those books that seem rich in possibility from the moment you see it. The publisher tells us it is an experiment

CLOSE UP

in an entirely new form. The text is inseparable from the photographs, each are integral parts of the other. This might inspire mistrust if the format were not so assuredly attractive. One glimpse inside will bring you to the Bruguere photographs that touch all that the unconscious contains, thrilling abstractions how proud you are of

Cannot! Cannot! Cannot!

Then we know that all is well, we are not coveting "fairy gold", text and photographs are indeed one, and a new layer of consciousness is indeed lifted. A mysterious, enchanted vision has risen like a sun. . . . And all our yesterdays have

lighted fools

There are rare pages, plunging a straight finger through the infinite. It might have been such a chi-chi book, but it "comes off". Three fundamental crises in human experience—Death, Jealousy and Ruin. Essentially a book to be taken up at odd quiet moments, otherwise sombre subjectivity will tire a shaken mind. Because the vision is distinguished, inevitably there are passages that in contrast seem laboured or trite. "The earth spins on through space, and time, unflagging. . ."

Well, our concern is the cinematic angle. If Sieveking and Bruguere have not been able to gladden the heart, to pour out thought, to enrich, the fault lies not with them, but with the graceless *cinéphile*.

RE-APPEARANCE OF JEANNE NEY.

The book of Ilya Ehrenbourg which gave its name to one of the most discussed, most lauded films ever made, *The Love of Jeanne Ney*, has now been published by Messrs. Peter Davies Ltd., in what appears to be an excellent translation from the Russian.

It is nearly a year since the film had its release (in restricted form, of course). The issue of the book, then, at this time is happily somewhat belated, happily, because an earlier publication, whether prior to or concurrently with the exhibition of the film, would doubtless have given rise to futile questions as to the extent to which adaptation is morally permissible.

The film's the thing, and if it suits the film to turn the book inside out, there is no ground for complaint. If weary critics come to the film carrying with them the associations derived from the book, that is their misfortune.

The only valid question, apart from that relating to the motives (which are always suspect) for alteration or transformation, is surely whether the film has lost or gained in the result.

There need be little hesitation in recommending this astonishing book which can perfectly well stand alone, without looking for any reflected glory from Pabst's piece. For that reason alone, perhaps "astonishing" would be an apt expression.

Perhaps it is not altogether fortunate that Henning, when he fell in love with Jeanne Ney, was not like Andrew, a married man, or responsible for the shot which closed the

CLOSE UP

career of Jeanne's father. Those particular conflicts and their solution were within the implications of the whole film, and if the omission of any reference to the marriage was the director's own choice, the other alteration may well have been impelled by a different line of argument. In *Pandora's Box* (not the French travesty the "Oeuvre moralisatrice qui pourrait s'intituler *le Rachat d'une Ame*") Lulu is the murderer of her lover's father, so there is a parallel (and doubtless a moral) to be found there.

The film realisation of the characters common to book and film shows the most penetrating and almost incredible insight, and it was cleverer, perhaps, of Pabst to translate Jeanne into Jehanne, Andrew into Henning, and above all to create Rasp-Halibieff, than to convey in terms of the screen the Paris of the Rue Morillon and the Rue Thibouméry, where a combination of smells of smoke, oil and urine passes for fresh air, and the hotel in the Rue Odessa, where they don't ask about your papers.

The scene to which Mr. Macpherson refers in his article in *Close Up* (Dec. 1927) of the (Bourgeois) wedding debauch, is not in the book, and possibly may have compensated for the impossibility of commenting on the love of Jeanne and Andrew, by reference to the incidents in the remaining 17 rooms of that infamous hotel.

The so-called happy ending was an improvement on the story in which Jeanne has to submit to the insults of Halibieff while Andrew is executed for the murder. Horror is piled on horror, and finally loses its effect.

The film avoided this (probably it had no choice in the

matter) and the emotional value of the last scene was quite negative.

It should be emphasised that while the film was in very many respects a realisation of the book, it remained an intensely individual creation; perhaps as much because the director found the material on which he had to work peculiarly adapted to his ideas as on account of the difference in the medium.

Margot's dramatic visit to the blind girl is described on page 130: "At the door stood the heroine of the finest film in the world, the reckless Margot, who was a cocaine addict". Well, actually Edith Jehanne was the heroine, still.

HOLLYWOOD'S IDEA OF REVUE.

They get Maurice Chevalier out to Hollywood, they put him in a film and they find that the only way in which they can show people his stuff is to let him sing his songs at a rehearsal which takes place during the film. They get Sophie Tucker and they put her into a masculined Al Jolson film. Universal get Paul Whiteman and find they can't put him in any film but they go on paying him a salary just the same.

Then Metro-Goldwyn, bless their little hearts, decide to make a revue. Much simpler. No need to bother about a story. Just a lot of people doing their stuff, and probably cheap in the long run (I am guessing here) because no one

CLOSE UP

artist does very much. Anyway the public flocks to see Bessie Love, Charles King (do they?), Marie Dressler, Marion Davies, Joan Crawford, Gilbert, Lionel Barrymore, Ukulele Ike, and so on. But is it a revue? No, sir! They don't know what a revue is. They get a lot of turns, and they use two stars to introduce them, and they put the whole lot behind footlights and give us a filmed stage-show, but it isn't a revue. How could it be?

There's no focus, no connecting link. Nothing but a lot of turns. Some of them are good. Some bad. Few of them are fresh or high-spirited. Gags awful. Still, Marie Dressler is great when she first comes on as the Queen, bowing. This is because she is a screen actress. But her lines are dreadful. And an Edwardian trio she does with Moran and Love is like a London freak party with the inhibitions left out. The chorus is dull, not used filmically at all, and dressed . . . well, dressed about as right for revue as Hollywood's smart women are well-dressed. Exaggerated in the wrong places and for the rest, we hope this is what's done. A nice mock-magic turn; an amusing Keaton cross-dressed snake charming dance with a string of sausages; some good tunes. A neat dance by Love. What else? Nagel looking pretty throughout, does that count?

For the rest, Crawford not nearly as snapped up as in her dancing films. Looks as though she'd reduced too hurriedly. Davies a flop . . . where are her impertinations, and no chance for Norma Shearer to be slick. A Ballet of Jewels number about as new as the earliest Folies Bergere.

"Lavishly staged" but not a bit interesting or luscious to look at. What we want in film revues is revue made by

CLOSE UP

the camera. Twenty-five stars are just odd bits, to be welded into patterns by the camera. There is no welding here, and there aren't any patterns. The nearest attempt at unity is having the turns introduced. I ask you. But we DID have patterns and roving camera and syncopated light hinted at in *Movietone Follies*, and we had Stepin Fetchit, who was the real focus. It's a pity, because they are interesting people, and if they'd built them up round Soph. who's a centre if ever there was one, what you might call a street refuge . . . well, round her, there might have been a pretty pattern of whirling lights and stars and songs. But, as I say, they put *her* in mother-love and they pour twenty-five stars on to a studio floor and hope they've got a revue. Whereas revue is . . . something much more intricate and satisfying. Not that *The Hollywood Revue* isn't fun, but it's so disappointing and silly.

R. H.

HOLLYWOOD NOTES.

Madame Satan will be Cecil de Mille's next production. Differing radically from anything DeMille has heretofore done in films, this to be a musical comedy. This type of production, however, will be neither an experiment nor a novelty for him, as in his pre-cinema days he was identified with musical stage shows both as an actor and a producer. Jeanie Macpherson is credited with the authorship of the story

CLOSE UP

of *Madame Satan*, with the dialogue to be written by someone else, and the music to be written by still another somebody.

* * *

Universal was the pioneer company to exhibit talking pictures on trans-oceanic liners, and now, keeping step with progress, it is showing its pictures on trans-continental airplanes. For this purpose 16mm. film is used in conjunction with a Duograph projector weighing but nine pounds and operated by a dry-cell battery. A special daylight screen is also part of the equipment, thus making it unnecessary to darken the cabin for the showing of the films.

* * *

Hold Everything, a forthcoming Warner Brothers' all-colour vitaphone film, features Georges Carpentier, the popular French prize fighter. Naturally, the story of the picture revolves around a prize fight, in which, also naturally, Carpentier proves the hero. The ringside set required nearly the entire space of one of the large sound stages, while nearly a thousand extra were employed as spectators of the fistic battle between the hero and his antagonist, Tony Stabenau.

* * *

Lillian Gish, who is completing her first talking picture, an adaptation of Molnar's *The Swan*, shares with Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and Douglas Fairbanks, the distinction of averaging but one picture a year. In these swift moving days of change and shifting public taste, this distinction carries with it a marked popular tribute of esteem and loyalty. It remains to be seen, however, what the public's reaction will be to Miss Gish's forthcoming rôle—

CLOSE UP

an ultra-fashionable worldly young princess, as contrasted with her heretofore wistful and demure characterizations.

* * *

The Lone Star Ranger, a Fox movietone, is the first old-time "Western" to be produced for the talking screen. It features George O'Brien and Sue Carol, against a background of three-thousand extras and the wilds of Arizona. If it meets with popular approval, it will undoubtedly signalize the return of the "Western," which for the past few years has been conspicuous by its absence from the screen. Tom Mix, who for nearly two decades was the leading hero of this type of cinema drama, has been giving exhibitions in a travelling circus since the decadence of the Wild West picture; and it is now not improbable, despite his fifty years, that he may again be seen on the screen in his dare-devil exploits.

* * *

Broadway Vagabond is the title selected for United Artists first musical comedy. A novel feature of its preparation was the use of skeleton sets for rehearsals. As the term indicates, the sets, for purposes of rehearsal, were merely outlined on the various stages; thus avoiding the expense of building and maintaining the actual sets ahead of production, while at the same time familiarizing the players with the layout of the scenes. Among the featured players in this film is Juliette Compton, well-known in England for her work on the London stage and in British made pictures. The director is Ted Sloman, who a few years ago attracted international notice by his masterly directing of *His People*.

* * *

CLOSE UP

Among recent technical improvements perfected at the Paramount-Lasky studios is a device for eliminating the noise of arc-lights, thus making possible their use in the production of talking pictures. Since the advent of sound, carbon arc-lamps have been discarded in favour of incandescents, because of the humming and high-pitched whistle of the arcs. Their photographic value, however, is much higher than the others; and the new sound-deadening device will, therefore, now not only again permit their use, but will also save the threatened scrapping of a vast and expensive equipment. Besides this invention, there has also been brought to perfection a high-speed colour-photography process, by which the most rapid motions can be successfully photographed. This new process is being put to its first practical use in a picture now under way at the studio—*Pointed Heels*.

* * *

Warner Brothers are preparing to produce various language versions of many of their one and two-reel pictures. Already, by way of preliminary experiment, they have made for the French market *Dans Culo Americain*, and for the German market *Echtiger Americkaner*. Others will follow in Spanish and the various Scandinavian languages, and are intended for showing not only in the countries indicated but also in the various foreign settlements of America.

Lasky-Paramount are following suit to the extent of producing two language versions of Maurice Chevalier's new picture, *The Big Pond*—one to be in English and the other in French.

* * *

CLOSE UP

Following the acquisition of theatres throughout the country by the leading Hollywood producers, as a development of the cinema business, the producing of stage plays promises to be the next step in the expanding of Hollywood's activities. As a start in this direction M-G-M have entered into a deal with Edgar Selwyn, one of America's leading theatrical producers, to put on plays in New York. The now close relationship between the stage and the talking screen makes this move a natural one, and if it should prove successful will give the Hollywood producers the combined profits of stage and screen plays, for the ultimate purpose is, of course, to adapt each theatrical production to the screen after it has had its stage run.

C. H.

Silberkonder über Feuerland.

A film by Gunther Plüschow.

This film is an extremely interesting document and should be popular, especially with children, for it is a real adventure story in pictures, of a trip made from Germany south across the Line in a sailing boat, down to Brazil (where there is a sequence showing the wild tribes shooting with bows and arrows) from there to Patagonia, das Feuerland, (Tierra del Fuego). The ship is shown at anchor in a fjord full of drift ice and penguins, where glaciers and mountains rise above

CLOSE UP

the trees, and flowers. A reel follows of mysterious landscapes taken from the air, that seem to belong to a lunar or undiscovered continent, very bleak and wild. The flight and landing of the aeroplane have not lost their adventurous quality in the photographs.

The film ends with wind, the rounding of Cape Horn, riding across grass, sea elephants off the coasts of Chile, and guanacoës hiding behind bushes. To most people the southern edge of the South American continent is a blank. This picture shows that blank to be a land of storms and perilous, almost Antarctic landscapes. The photography is excellent. It is certainly (in spite of an occasional over-emphasis on the nationalistic side) one of the best travel films shown this year.

The White Hell of Piz Palu.

A Sokal-Film production for Aafa-Sonderverleih.

Directed by Dr. Arnold Fanck and G. W. Pabst.

Photographed by Sepp Allgeier, Rich. Angst,
Hans Sneeberger.

Sets by Erno Metzner.

Featuring Gustav Diessl, Leni Riefenstahl,
Ernst Peterson.

"If people are such fools as to go climbing impossible heights and get into difficulties, that is their own look out."

CLOSE UP

A common objection, this, to the film of mountaineering. Yet it is something of the same spirit that sent Hannibal over the Alps, that sent out the Mayflower, indeed, that mapped the world. If man had never set foot on a hill, most certainly much of the world would be uninhabited. To-day, it is true, climbing is rarely associated with discovery, but that it has its old appeal is proved by the thousands who yearly scale the summits—not necessarily fools, but adventurers. Those who admit the lure of the sea might well realise that mountains have their call. If a pleasure-boat goes down we do not say “if people are such fools as to go on a boat for nothing better than pleasure, that is their own look out”. The chances of accident have to be taken. Death comes more frequently to the careful town-dweller walking in the streets. Therefore, a film that concerns the rescue of some perfectly accomplished climbers, who fall into mischance, is not a film dealing with “fools” and their selfishness, but as symbolically pertinent as any story of human conflict and alliance.

Some will accept this idea instinctively. Others will never accept it. It will be their loss, in this instance, at least, for here, as never before, is the living spirit of the mountains, vivid, rarified, terrifying and lovely. Other mountain films we have had, but we have never had *mountains*—almost personifiable, things of wild and free moods, forever changing. The glorious rush of avalanches punctuating silence, warnings of greater, more terrible torrents. Snow blown up in a bright fringe on the ridges. Sun, cloud, the never ending revelations of light. Nobody who loves the hills could fail to be held by this tribute to their splendour.

CLOSE UP

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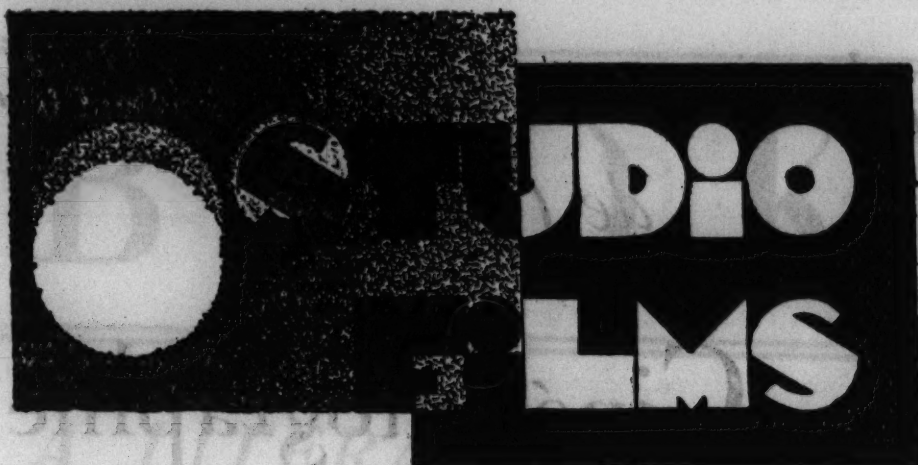
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Try to see in your head some old women perched on top of a cart full of vegetables, in their best clothes, going to market. Then think of a thunder storm coming up and imagine what would happen ! Finally repeat over and over to yourself

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